

# NEWSLETTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE



February 2022

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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 2022! 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 2022 TCKRA Magnet Fridge Calendar, a free parking pass for the new Fentress Amigos Beach and San Marcos River Retreat, the TCKRA Newsletter and the annual TCKRA banquet! Thank you for supporting Texas paddling sports!

[Join the TCKRA](#)

## **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 <https://www.tckra.org/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 2022 TCKRA wall or fridge magnet calendar
- A 2022 TCKRA parking pass at Fentress Amigos Beach and San Marcos River Retreat
- 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  
Clint Sutherland  
Jay Daniel  
Keifer Mauldin

Brian Jones

### Alternates

Morgan Kohut

## 2022 Race Calendar

*(Editor's Note: We will continue to update the 2022 Race Calendar as soon as information on the races becomes available.)*

- March 5<sup>th</sup>** – Buffalo Bayou Regatta, Houston Tx 9am  
**March 13<sup>th</sup>** – TCKRA Spring Break Open, Fentress to Luling 90, 10am  
**March 19<sup>th</sup>** – TCKRA Spring River Clean Up: Luling 90 8:30am  
**March 19<sup>th</sup>** - SASPAMCO Showdown, River Crossing Park, San Antonio 12noon-4pm  
**March 20<sup>th</sup>** – MAC #1 (TBD) see MAC Facebook page for more information  
**March 26<sup>th</sup>** – Greens Bayou Canoe and Kayak Classic, Greens Bayou Park, Houston 9:30am  
**March 27<sup>th</sup>** - MAC #2 Staples to Luling 90: Rec. start 9am, Comp. start 10am  
**April 2<sup>nd</sup>** – TCKRA ICF State Championships, Brooks Lake, Sugarland, 10 am  
**April 3<sup>rd</sup>** - MAC #3 Luling 90 to Palmetto State Park: Rec. start 9am, Comp. start 10am  
**April 9<sup>th</sup>** - TCKRA Elm Fork Regatta, Trinity River, 9am Comp. start, 9:30am Adventure start  
**April 23<sup>rd</sup>** - Mac #4, Michael P. Simmons Memorial Night Race, Palmetto to Gonzales, 5:30/6:30/7:30pm  
**April 30<sup>th</sup>** - ACA ICF Marathon National Championships, Brooks Lake, Sugarland Tx, 9am  
**May 7<sup>th</sup>** – Texas River Marathon (the Prelim), River Haven to Pumphouse in Victoria, 9 am  
**June 13<sup>th</sup>** – 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Texas Water Safari, Spring Lake San Marcos to Seadrift, 9am  
**July 9<sup>th</sup>** – TCKRA USCA State Championship and SUP Race, TBD  
**August 6<sup>th</sup>** – Neches Wilderness Race, Palestine Tx, 8am

**\*\*Many pictures in the TCKRA newsletter are provided by and thanks to Sandy Yonley, Jill Mulder, Patty Geisinger, Kate Tart and in the Paddler Profile: Martin Harris and Kevin Bradley\*\***

## 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)*

# John DuPont

### **What is your full name?**

**John-** John DuPont aka Possum Belly. I was honored and truly shocked when Patty asked me to be in the Paddler Profile because there are so many great paddlers out there could have been given this opportunity. The Paddler selected is to be “interesting and accomplished” and I never really thought of myself in those terms. I am humbled; Thank you Patty and the envelope full of benjamin’s is headed your way.

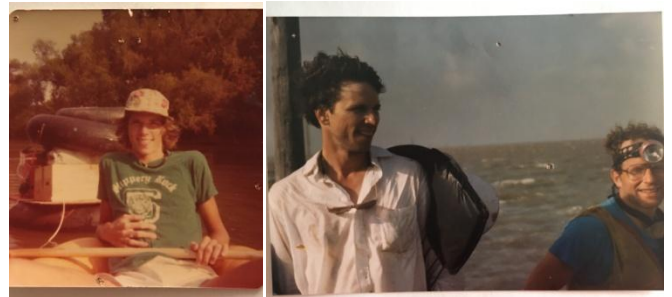
### **Where are you from originally and where do you live now?**

**John-** My family was in Houston, parents moved there after WWII and I lived there thru high school. Moved to Austin-Round Rock area for college & never left.

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

**John-** My dad would take all of us kids sailing and motor boating and fishing so I’ve always been comfortable around the water. In college, my best friend & roommate, Vern and I bought an inflatable raft from Academy back when it was an Army surplus store. It got me hooked on the river and in that little raft, we experienced an incredibly epic journey, where essentially nothing happened and yet the total experience was an epiphany; there’s nothing about racing in the story, only about life. The story is that we knew the Colorado went thru Austin all the way to Matagorda, so after we got the raft we decided to see how far we could make it towards the coast. We didn’t check any maps, we didn’t own a vehicle, didn’t ask advice and didn’t have money for supplies. We loaded the camping and fishing gear on a drag-behind inner

tube, packed a frying pan, a bottle of cooking oil into the raft and found a ride to the 973 bridge and started down the river, not knowing where we were going or when we’d get there. Had several memorable incidents and 3 days later, we made it to the Utley Bridge. The fisherman there told us he was the mayor of Utley and pointed us in the direction back to Austin so we hitchhiked our way back. That story, as pointless as it sounds, was something we’d bring up frequently to friends & family; eventually I figured out that it was because the trip was a microcosm of our lives up to that point: two knuckleheads not knowing where we were going, not sure what would happen along the way, and heading to an uncertain endpoint, just like our lives.



A year later, we decided to upgrade the raft and we pooled our money to get a Royalex canoe; this was just a couple years after they first became available. That got us out on the whitewater: San Marcos, Guadalupe, Barton Creek, and spring break trips to Arkansas for the Cossatot, Mulberry, Buffalo, & Big Piney; then eventually to the Rio Grande lower canyons.

### **How did you get started racing?**

**John** - I first heard about the Safari thru my dad’s sailing because back in the mid 60’s, the Bludworth brothers (Houston sailboat racers & builders) won the safari when the finish line was in Freeport and sailing was a significant component of the race. Dad told me their stories of winning this wild, difficult race and the Safari stuck in my head as one of those things I should do, eventually. 20 years later, I entered the safari in 1987; both my partner & I fully entered with the only goal being to finish in under 100 hours, fully expecting to be one & done finishers. Partner Dave was the wise one and followed thru with the plan, whereas I was sucked into the vortex of safari racing.

### Where do you paddle most frequently?

**John** – For close to home training, I hit upper end of Lake Travis or upper Lake Austin in my Extreme. River training runs are always team runs (2-6 man boats), frequently San Marcos or lower Guad. I loved having Bobby Smart from Louisiana as a partner so we could train on the Trinity River or Village Creek; scenery over there is amazingly different than the central Texas rivers.



### What is your favorite race?

**John** – Safari is the pinnacle, and I try to get to Baltzell's fantastic Town Lake races and the Kaitlin's MAC races, especially MAC-4. (Sidenote-there was a fight among my 3 daughters for last year's hat & I really wanted to keep it for myself). Triple Crown is still on my bucket list.



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

**John** – The "way-back" race that I really liked is extinct now; back in mid 80s to '94, the Kerrville 4<sup>th</sup> of July race on the Guadalupe was a 17 mile short race that had opportunities to break your clavicle on wild dam portages (just ask Uncle Russ), running over ankle

twisting limestone flutes for several half-mile runs, and poker chip tokens at the checkpoints. I was younger back then & I doubt if I could handle that tough of a race these days.



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

**John** - Over the years we've paddled several Spencer boats (California 4-man, B-Team boat, Swinging Singles, & 7<sup>th</sup> Hat) and a Bugge 6-man. Also had a Lacy 4-man boat back in '94 and Rainmaker Mysterious Hats boat. For paddles: YIKES. DO NOT FOLLOW THIS EXAMPLE, TECHNOLOGY IS DIFFERENT NOW: the first several years of multiman, we went the entire safari race and practices on double blades and they were the big Lendel flat blade paddles; brings a tear to my eye thinking about it. Recently we've single bladed most races and training.



### What is your training regimen?

**John** – Start the year on the HoHoHochheim run and paddle every weekend that weather allows in Jan thru March. April thru June is on the San Marcos & Guad exclusively, for a training run or MAC race. From July thru the San Marcos Solo, I'll run about 5 or 6 of the races.

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

**John** – Weekdays I do short runs and lift weights and aerobic exercise.

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

**John** – I grew up eating balanced meals and I still try to eat healthy year round. During races/training runs, I'll stay hydrated using Nuun added to water. Nutrition is either food like chips, sandwich, cookie, etc and/or a nutrition mix that John Bugge recommends: one scoop of powdered muscle milk and 3 scoops of maltodextrin mixed in a bike bottle of water.



### What are your significant accomplishments in paddling?

**John** – I raced in over 150 races outside of the Safari & Prelim races. Including Safari/Prelim brings the grand total to about 230 competitions and successfully avoided the winner's podium on all but 3 occasions.



### What do you enjoy most about paddling?

**John** – I enjoy getting to know so many different types people with a common thread of having the river in

their blood. I also love the chance to either race or do a training run with new paddlers, with "new" meaning anyone that I haven't paddled with before. Without canoeing, I might never have met Polecat or John Mark or any of the other paddlers over the past 35 years.



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

**John** – Continue paddling and meeting new racers every possible chance.



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

**John** – I wouldn't call it words of wisdom, but new paddlers should figure out your racing goals (could be the finish is the only goal or could be to become a top racer) and ask those with experience on how to accomplish those goals. Attend Safari Seminar, and talk with people like Holly Orr, Roy Tyrone, Chris Paddock, Jim Weber, John Bugge, the Yonley's, etc. as great sources of info; if you get any advice from the Cowboys it might be suspect.

### Any final words?

**John**- After the Safari in 1993, Polecat talked John Dunn & me into continuing paddling down the coast to the old Safari finish line in Freeport. There was an article in the 1993 TCRA newsletter about the trip and a copy is included. \*\*\*The story of the 1993 Safari will be included after the River Guru's Palmetto Hotline\*\*\*

**River Clean Up**  
Saturday, March 19<sup>th</sup> 8:30am  
*Morgan Kohut*



It's time to break out that Aluminum Canoe! Please join us for the TCKRA Spring River Clean-up on Saturday, March 19<sup>th</sup>! This year we will be focusing our efforts on the lower river of the San Marcos River between Fentress and Zedler Mill in Luling. We'll meet at the Luling 90 gravel bar at 8:30am to have a quick briefing before splitting up and getting on the water

Don't let not having a boat or partner stop you from joining in on the fun, let us know ahead of time and we can team you up with someone and/or find you a boat to paddle (thank you to Holly Orr with #texascanoesandkayaks). RSVP on our website to guarantee a gift card to grab lunch on us after your day on the river at the Highway 80 Feed Barn in Martindale. We would like to get a headcount for food, so if you can RSVP here: [RSVP for clean up Lunch](#)

Looking forward to seeing everyone and giving back to the river that brings all of us so much joy!

**Race Reports**

**Texas Winter 100K (TWO)**  
*Barb Edginton, West Hansen*



The 12<sup>th</sup> annual Texas Winter 100k (TWO) was scheduled for Saturday, January 29, 2022. As race directors, we try to schedule the event around other events in the area in order to entice as many participants as possible.

The TWO is scheduled in January to assist paddlers in maintaining training for upcoming events and is, in essence, a kick-off to the paddling season. We have experienced a wide range of weather from frigid 28 degree temperatures to perfect 60 degree sunny days. In any year, the weather starts off nice and cool at 5:00 am when the Adventure Paddling Class starts their race. Ironically, the temperatures usually get colder when preparing for the Competitor Class to begin 2 hours later at 7:00 am.

The Adventure Class has 16 hours to complete the 65-mile course. It is a great “first race” for those without a lot of races under their belt. The course is pretty forgiving, can offer challenges early on and then retains a nice flow farther down the river. We had approximately 30 Adventure Class paddlers with more than half of those being first-time paddlers with the TWO. A handful of those paddlers did not complete the course for various reasons.



The Competitor Class begins at 7:00 am. The morning vibe is completely different when boats are setting up. There is more of a competitive nature among the participants and getting out on the water for early warm-up paddles is key. This year we had 25 Competitive paddlers on the course. It will be great to note, we had a nice field of Women Solo paddlers this year, as well.



Noon, on race day, is the start time for our Stand Up Paddlers (SUP) as well as our new Parent/Child class. This is our largest field of SUPs to date and our 2<sup>nd</sup> year for the P/C class. They all leave from the FM969/Utley Bridge underpass and travel 14-miles downriver to Bastrop. Outside of potentially low water and several rapids, this part of the river offers a great opportunity for new paddlers to experience the river.





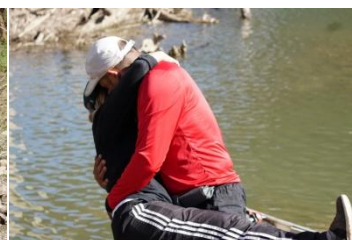
Our 12<sup>th</sup> year was another success. We had many fantastic first year sponsors that donated prizes to our event. We had a lot of new paddlers register and participate. We offered a cold start, a warm afternoon and cold finish to challenge those paddling. In addition, the headwind on the lower river gave way to challenge even the experienced paddler.



Our overall winning boat was the team of Chris and Kyle Issendorf. They started at 7:00 am and finished at 3:52 pm with an overall time of 8 hours and 52 minutes. Our first solo finisher was Geoff Waters coming in at 4:49 pm followed closely by Chuck Scheidt at 4:50 pm. Top Woman Solo Paddler was Salli O'Donnell finishing at 4:58 pm.



In the Adventure Class, our overall winner was Jay Berger coming in at 5:06 pm followed by the Adventure Tandem Team of Ahlhorn/Briones at 5:17 am. Rounding out the top three Adventure Class was the tandem team of Golden/Mynatt at 5:47 pm.



## Town Lake Race Series

*John Baltzell, Patty Geisinger*

John hosted his 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Town Lake series this year, He had a great turn-out with new folks coming each week. As in the past, each Sunday focused on a different course on the lake with a highlight on different classes of boats. Such fun to have race type conditions in mostly good weather this year!



## USCA Semi Annual Meeting Report 1/8/2022

*Joy Emshoff, TCKRA Delegate to USCA*

This year's USCA Semi Annual Meeting was held virtually. It was originally scheduled in Saratoga Springs, New York but was canceled due to staffing issues at the hotel where it was to be held. Reportedly they had 75%

of their staff out with covid so they had to close. The business of the club was accomplished online and went very well.

The highlights of the meeting were as follows-

Weston Willoughby, President  
Teresa Stout, Vice President  
John Edwards, Treasurer  
Barb Bradley, Secretary

1. The 2022 USCA National Marathon/Sprint/Orienteering Championships will be held in Newago, Michigan, Aug 11 – 14, 2022
2. The 2022 USCA National Stock Aluminum Championships will be held in Bastrop, TX Oct 1 – 2, 2022
3. The 2023 USCA National Marathon/Sprint/Orienteering Championships will be held in Lockhaven, Pa, Aug 10 – 13<sup>th</sup>
4. No bid has been submitted for 2023 USCA National Stock Aluminum Championships.
5. Officer elections were held. Teresa Stout will remain Vice President; **Barbara Bradley will also remain as Secretary.**
6. A committee was formed to discuss the rising cost of the medals and the problem with maintaining and keeping track of the traveling trophies. Teresa Stout will head this committee.
7. The site was selected for the 2023 Annual Meeting. It was a unanimous vote to return to St Pete Beach, Fl. Everyone voted for warm weather venues in January!

If you are interested in reading more and certainly if you want to read more about the USCA, go to [www.uscanoe.com](http://www.uscanoe.com)

Respectfully submitted,

Joy Emshoff  
TCKRA Delegate to USCA

To Join the USCA: <http://uscanoe.com/join-usca/>

## Upcoming Races

### 50<sup>th</sup> Buffalo Bayou Regatta

Saturday March 5<sup>th</sup>, 9am



**Starting Line:** 7700 San Felipe (1/4 mile west of Voss)

**Finish Line:** [Allen's Landing](#) (1001-1005 Commerce Street)

**Schedule Race Day Registration:** 7:30 – 8:45 am **Start Time:** 9:00 am **Finish Line and Awards Ceremony:** Allen's Landing (1001 Commerce Street at Main Street) **1:00pm**

Paddlers, ages 12 and up, are encouraged to participate in the 15-mile race along the scenic Buffalo Bayou. Whether you are entering competitively or paddling for pleasure, you won't want to miss out on this longstanding Houston tradition! **All participants must sign a waiver.**

More Information and registration can be found on the Buffalo Bayou Website: [Register for BBR](#)

**The race begins at 9am with 4 starts. ALL starts will be in-water.**

**Category start times have changed.**

- **9:00am:** Non-Competitive and Day-of Registrants
- **9:10am:** Tandem Recreational Kayaks and Recreational Solo Kayaks (long and short)
- **9:20am:** Team Sponsors and Recreational Canoes
- **9:30am:** Performance Unlimited and Solo Unlimited

**Finish Line from 11:30am - 2pm at Allen's Landing (1019 Commerce Street)** Free shuttle service will be provided for all participants (no boats) at the Finish Line from 11:30am - 3:30pm to transport paddlers back to the start area. Paddlers will receive free lunch and drinks, including St. Arnold's beer.

### 2022 San Antonio River Basin Paddling Race Series

March 5<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>, Sept. 25<sup>th</sup> & Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>

The San Antonio River Authority (River Authority), together with the San Antonio River Foundation, is excited to launch the 2022 San Antonio River Basin Paddling Race Series. Experienced paddling racers from all over are invited to participate in 4 competitive paddling races throughout the year held along multiple sections of the beautiful San Antonio River Basin from the world-famous San Antonio River Walk to the historic community of Goliad. Each race covers a different distance and will provide new challenges certain to excite competitive paddle racers. The San Antonio River Basin Paddling Race Series was designed in the spirit of the Texas Water Safari, just on a smaller scale. Awards ceremonies with prizes for the top three finishers in each category will be held following every race!

For More information, registration, visit: [San Antonio River Authority](#)

## **TCKRA Spring Break Open**

Sunday March 13<sup>th</sup>

*Nate Tart & Jay Daniel*



The TCKRA invites you to open the 2022 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 <https://www.tckra.org/event-details/tckra-spring-break-open> to register for the race or on race day beginning at 8:30am.

Classes: Men's Solo Unlimited, Women's Solo Unlimited, Men's Tandem Unlimited, Women's Tandem Unlimited, Men's Aluminum, Women's Aluminum, Mixed

All Solo and Tandem hulls are welcome so BYOB (Bring your own Boat) and we'll see you on the river!

Race Fee's: \$20/racer

## **Martindale Athletic Club (MAC) Race 1-4**

*Kaitlin Mynar*



Welcome to another racing season! It's almost springtime which means it's time for MAC races. Some notable changes to the race structure this year will be that all races will have a recreation and a competition start, for races 1-3 that is 9am and 10am respectively. For The Night Race, there will be 3 starts again, 530pm, 630pm, and 730pm. This staggered start schedule worked really well last year in terms of having everyone off the water by midnight, no parking issues, and no issues with the mass starts.

Just to reiterate from previous years, the purpose of the MAC races is to get you as prepared as possible for The Texas Water Safari. Racing is the best way to train. Try out different drink mixes, test a handoff, nail your portages, experience being under the clock and moving at a race pace.



Right now, you'll notice that there is not yet a MAC 1. If we can't get a new course set up, we will just forego MAC 1 this year. The best way to stay up to date with any changes of any of our races, is to join our Facebook page. That is the one and only place that we will post updates to. [MAC FB Group](#)



All races are very informal. No preregistration. Register day of with cash and signing a waiver. You can contact me directly or through the Facebook page if you have any questions.

Hope to see you on the water!

### **Martindale Athletic Club's 2022 Spring racing schedule:**

Race 1 – TBD (formerly City Park to Staples: please watch the MAC FB page for updates)

Race 2 – Staples to Luling 90 (24 miles) \$10 entry fee Sun, March 27th at 10 am

Race 3 – Luling 90 to Palmetto (20 miles) \$10 entry fee Sun, April 3rd at 10 am

Race 4 – Mike Simmons Memorial Race (The Night Race)– Palmetto State Park \*pay for parking\* to Gonzales 183 (24 miles) \$30 entry fee Saturday, April 23rd at 7:30pm



## **Greens Bayou Canoe and Kayak Classic**

Saturday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 am

*Grady Hicks*



Location: Greens Bayou Park: 700 Westmont, Houston, TX. Take 1-10 east through Houston and exit at Uvalde (exit 780). U-turn at Uvalde and take the second right onto Westmont Dr. The park is around the curve on the left. All races will start at 9:30 am with staggered start for each class. The Entry fee is \$20. For additional information visit: <https://www.houstoncanoeracing.com/>

Classes Contested:

K-1 ICF Surf Ski

Solo Unlimited SUP

USCA C-1 USCA C-2

OC-1 Tandem Unlimited

Recreational Kayak Aluminum

Race course will be a loop course of 4 miles. The start heads downstream (to the right), turn at the second bridge and return upstream for a buoy turn and back to start. The complete course is two loops.

## **TCKRA ICF K-1 State Championship**

Saturday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 10 am

*Sandy Yonley*



The 2022 TCKRA ICF K1 State Championship race will be Saturday, April 2nd at 10am on Brooks Lake in Sugar Land, TX. (Parking location is wherever you want to park).

The youth/kids race will start at 12:30 pm at the fountains near the footbridge (like last year). The awards ceremony will begin at 1pm.

The entry fee is \$30 (\$10 for Juniors/Youth/Kids). To guarantee a 2022 racer t-shirt, but you must register online by 11:59pm on Thursday, March 10th. The t-shirts will be unisex sizing.

### **Online registration is open.**

Register here: <https://www.tckra.org/event-details/tckra-icf-marathon-state-championship-3>

Race day registration (location of table TBA) will begin at 9:00am at the race portage and the race briefing will be at 9:30am. The exact portage will be along the bank in approximately the same location as previous years. Parking is wherever you can find it—you can park behind the Whole Foods or anywhere that is public parking.

The course will be the same as previous championships.

Each lap is approx 1.6 miles long.

The laps are as follows per class:

7 laps (6 portages) for Men's and Men's Masters 40+

6 laps (5 portages) for Women's and Men's Masters 50+

5 laps (4 portages) for Women's Masters (40+ and 50+) and Juniors (<18yrs)

Awards will be given for the champion in the following categories:

Men's Open, Women's Open, Men's Masters (40+), Women's Masters (40+), Men's Masters+(50+), Women's Masters+(50+), and Juniors (<18yrs).

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Elm Fork Regatta**

Saturday April 9<sup>th</sup>, 9am & 9:30am



TCKRA is super excited to announce the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Elm Fork Regatta this year! The race has been moved to the spring time in hopes of igniting early year racing, maybe a little higher water (Hopefully no floods) and some cooler temperatures. This course has two different starts for the adventure and the competition classes. If you are just starting out and would like to give racing a try you can start at 9:30am and do a 9 mile course. If you have that competitive spirit and want to go for the complete course of 15 miles you will be starting at 9:00am. With the two different start times we hope that the competitor and adventure class will meet up on the river. So please bring your canoe, kayak, surfski, or SUP and come enjoy a north Texas race and enjoy the huge shade trees at the finish line.



Registration is open: [Elm Fork Regatta](#)

## **Texas River Marathon (The Prelim)**

Saturday May 1<sup>st</sup>, 9am



River Haven RV Park to The Pumhouse Restaurant, Victoria City Park  
May 7th, 2022

From River Haven RV Resort to the Pump House Restaurant in Victoria, this great race is run over 35 miles of the fastest water on the Texas Water Safari course. Finishing positions in the Texas River Marathon, also fondly known as "The Prelim", are used to determine starting positions in the Safari itself. It is not necessary to race this race in order to race the TWS. In addition to qualifying teams for starting positions, this event provides racers with the opportunity to see a couple of rapids on the race course. Many Texas Water Safari racers will traverse the "Nursery rapids" during the night and it can be very helpful to have seen them during the daylight first during the Texas River Marathon. Cut-off deadline for reaching Hwy 477 Nursery Bridge is 1:30 p.m. (Changes to this cut-off will be announced at race briefing). T- shirts are only guaranteed to teams and one team captain per team if entered on or before April 1. You will register your boat number and you are required to have this number on your boat race morning. Team captains are required for this race and cannot be shared between teams.

For more information: [www.texaswatersafari.org](http://www.texaswatersafari.org)

As with all TWS sponsored races, Safari rules and classes apply. To register:

<https://racehubhq.com/races/TexasRiverMarathon2021>



## **58<sup>th</sup> Annual Texas Water Safari**

June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022 9am

**When:** June 11<sup>th</sup> – June 15th 2022, 9am

**Where:** Spring Lake, San Marcos to Seadrift, Tx

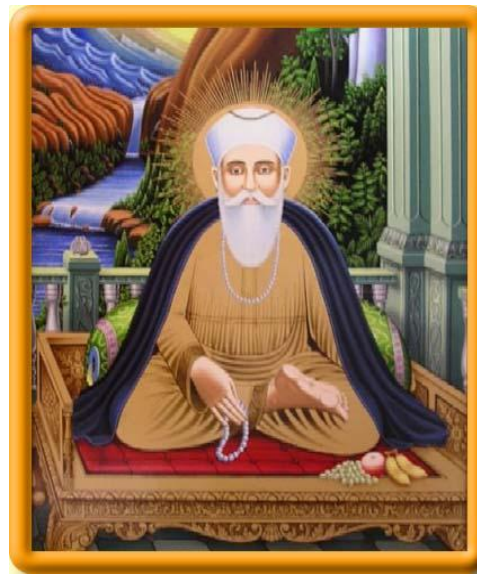
**Registration:** <https://racehubhq.com/races/TexasWaterSafari2022>

**More Information:** Race information, course description, rules and procedures, boat types and all details regarding the TWS can be found at: <http://www.texaswatersafari.org>



# Palmetto Hotline

*River Guru*



Greetings, Spiz-swilling paddle people.

Thank you for tuning in to the latest edition of the Palmetto Hotline, your source for the hottest “alternative facts” on the river. Yes, I know, the **River Guru** went radio silent before Christmas, hunkering down at home and stocking up on toilet paper and coffee in hopes of surviving any upcoming supply chain issues or power grid failures. But I’m back - and for the moment, Covid-free - because we know that the one thing that tops everyone’s must-read list this time of year is the Guru’s paddling report.

Let’s jump right in ...

TCKRA pulled off a swanky (well, it’s all relative) banquet at the Goynes San Marcos River Retreat to cap off 2021. Participants peeled off their river clothes (no, not actually during the party, you creeps), and donned real pants and shirts with collars for the festivities. They ate brisket, turkey and sausage on tables set with real tablecloths, too.

A few of the many awards given went to the following: **Brenda “Best Hair” Jones**; **Nate “Best Canoe Exit” Tart**; **Jeanette “Happiest Paddler” Burris**; and **Kristen “Bank Bunny” Daniel**.

The River Guru hears that **Phil and Mary Jo Gumbert** are heading up the **Staples Paddling Club**. According to an old cardboard box duct-taped to bridge support, the group meets every Tuesday and Thursday morning to hone their V-shaped physiques. The sign also notes that everything is subject to change. (Warning: Anyone who joins is automatically enlisted as the club’s new president.) If you do happen to find them, look for **Richard Zambrana** paddling his new C1 and **Erin Magee**, who trains more than any other paddler in the history of paddling, in her broken down old K1. Both are about the same speed. There have been sightings of a long-haired, barefoot guy with a beard paddling a Landick 2 in the neighborhood, too. Reports say he’s friendly and hauls off trash. We’re sure **John Qualls** inspired him by the lack of shoes.

After squatting at the Goynes place on the river for most of the last year, **Jeff Wueste** and **Sheila Reiter** led a mass migration of paddlers to river towns. (By the way, the River Guru is still stinging about missing that

Grand Canyon paddling adventure. I could have stayed upright in the boat longer than **Jeff**, and I'm used to peeing in the great outdoors.)

**Courtney** and **Ryan Martinez**, **David** and **Kim Kaiser**, **Chris** and **Shannon Issendorf**, along with a whole bunch of their kids, also packed up and moved the New Braunfels area, probably in hopes of becoming the next paddling family poster child. It's not just the paddlers who yanked up stakes and moved to the former hometown of Ralph the Swimming Pig, either. Heather Harrison, still gloating over how she managed to get pictures of the **Kaiser** family on a billboard on Interstate 35 a few years back - something neither **Erich Schlegel** or **Ashley Landis** could never manage - along with paddle photographers **Kate Tart**, **Sandy Yonley**, **Patty Geisinger** and **Jill** now live in San Marcos, too (not!)

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Apparently swarms of paddlers are foregoing the usual races this year and instead plan to race in the inaugural Battle of the Paddle on the San Antonio Riverwalk, where apparently they think they can sip margaritas and eat nachos at checkpoints during the 5-mile, two-lap race.

That's at least better than the **Texas Winter 100K**, where paddlers' hands and hair freezes while they paddle the Colorado River, hoping they don't get caught in one of those mysterious unexplained river boils. The only reason to enter that race is for the schwag....

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**Brian Jones** and **Lydia Huelskamp** were planning to race in **West's** new CR100 race in April. Then West changed his mind about holding the race, which might explain why no one else seems to know it even existed. **Mike Drost** started the 100-miler between Bastrop and Columbus as an adventure race, with hidden check points that required navigation skills beyond the usual "go downstream." Could West revive it? If the River Guru had their way, the race would start at dusk, with a quarter mile run with a boat before reaching the river.

You wimpy Texas paddlers have to gear up for Michigan somehow, don't you?

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Everyone's buying new boat this year, it seems. **Mollie Binion** bought a new C1. So did **Lydia**. **Shannon** already has three new C1s, so she can't possibly need another. **Virginia** is trying to talk **Morgan** into paddling a C1. **Kaitlin** and **Holly** paddle C1s all the time - and did **Cecili Bugge's** boyfriend in Michigan come through with a good C1 for Christmas? **Lilly Jones** is looking to upgrade from aluminum to C1. **Kelly Stone**, aka Bay Momma, may not be the fastest in a C1, but she does have the most entertaining costume and best jokes. **Veronica Sosa** and the **Sackett** enjoy a good C1 run, too.

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Even out-of-towners are getting in on the action. **Hoyt** will welcome anyone who thinks they're tough enough to join him for an upstream aluminum run in Junction.

Up in Dallas, **Clint** is drumming up enthusiasm in the paddling community. (It's about time someone up there does something - we know **Wade** and **Sam** are there, but just can't shake their College Station roots.)

What you're really wondering about, though, is the Big Dance in June. And so, without further ado, we here at River Guru Central will peer into our crystal ball for a few predictions ...

Expect high water (yeah, pay no attention to the current drought) and the largest novice class in history. Also, look for logjams, hallucinations, on-board meltdowns, off-board meltdowns, chaos, tumps, mud, dead cows, and all the usual stuff.

**Tommy Yonley** and **Tim Rask** are going for the overall win.

**West Hansen** and **Jeff Wueste** think they'll finish in the top five, but they're probably more focused on landing a movie deal starring Paul Newman and Burt Reynolds for their planned Arctic Cowboys expedition through the Northwest Passage. Don't they know it's cold up there? And what happened to **Jimmy Harvey**?

The other **Cowboys** team (the one in a six-man) won't declare their official lineup until April - but you can count on at least two paddlers named John sitting in their six-man boat, wearing wide-brimmed hats and too-tight tights.

Husband-wife favorites **Jim and Myla Weber** may team up with **Bobby, RD** and two others over the unsaid (but very advanced) age to race as masters.

**Debbie Richardson**, the most organized Safari racer of the decade, will put together the event's most detailed training schedule. Early recon indicates a possible two-woman aluminum pairing with **Pam LeBlanc**. Expect an overdose of selfies, blogs, Instagram posts, and coordinated outfits.

**Gwen Hills** has teamed up with an unidentified dragon boat racer in an aluminum boat, in hopes of winning the novice class. Don't those 10 Au Sable wins count for anything?

**Will "Can't Stop, Won't Stop Paddling" Leeds, Chris Champion**, and four other dudes are said to be taking a six-man.

Rookies **Ellen Gass** and **Gena McKinley** were spotted at the Town Lake Series Race No. 2 using 40-pound boards as paddles and vowing to make paddle training a priority. (And when you do finish, remember that Safari was way harder back before you could get food handoffs on the banks.)

**Virginia Parker, Kaitlin Jiral** and **Shannon Issendorf** are talking about racing together again - maybe joining forces with another team to go six.

**Curt Slaten** is just trying not to sustain any injuries the week before the race starts this year...

Everyone else apparently is fed up with their fellow adults and teaming up with offspring - **Chris Issendorf** and his son, **Heather Harrison** and her son; **Holly Orr** and her son; **Kelly Stone** and her son. Perhaps **Ian Rolls** and his daughter. **Surely a Zeek** and **Gibson** will continue the family tradition of racing with a kid. We've also heard whisperings of **Jerry Cochran** and **Pete Binion** going with grandkids, and **Adam (Tall Boy) Sims** is already trying to teach his infant how to paddle.

All you grownups better get your butts in shape because all the kids - **Kyle**, 16; **Addie**, 14; **Mayne**, 15; **William**, 13; **Matthew**, 11; and **Welch**, 10 are getting strong and have more boat handling skill than most adults. There's even speculation about a new six-man team, Addie and the Boys, sponsored by the working parents - they just have to figure out a way around the age limit.

And that's it, for now, you paddling ingrates. Until next time, the River Guru wishes you a slap in the face from a huge alligator gar, a log jam filled with spiders, and a lost paddle.

*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.*

## **John DuPont shares his recollections of the 1993 (extended) Safari to Freeport: from the 1993 TCRA Newsletter**

*I am writing this memory of the expedition that Polecat (Bill Stafford), John Dunn and I made from Seadrift to Freeport hoping that it will create anticipation for the approaching Safari. For those who are unfamiliar with the history behind our trip, I offer this explanation. In the early days of the Safari, the racers would go to Seadrift and then camp out for a few days. They would then complete a staged race to the finish line at Corpus or Freeport or Port Lavaca. After last year's race, we decided to follow the old race course to Freeport. This article tells of the trip.*

Our team completed the Safari on Monday morning. Afterwards, I had breakfast at a Seadrift restaurant and ran into John and Ginsie Dunn. When I asked John whether he was ready for the trip to Freeport, he said that it looked like there was a conflict with an approaching family reunion, and he probably wouldn't be able to make it. After breakfast, I headed to the pavilion and noticed Polecat talking to a couple of guys that I'd never met before; I assumed they were some of the Thomaston folks that follow the race every year. Bill introduced me to Tim Delaney and Frank Tilley, reporter and photographer for the Victoria Advocate newspaper. Tim talked to Bill for a while. My brain was working in a Safari- induced slow motion, so it took some time before I realized that he was conducting an interview about our upcoming trip to Freeport. Bill did most of talking about the expedition and I filled in a few details. Bill hadn't heard about John's upcoming reunion, and he told the reporter that all three of us would be making the trip. *(A note to novice Safari paddlers: You will need to have a team member from the Victoria area or you will need to win the race if you want to get a lot of press coverage. Since I won't ever be in the latter category, the only other option for me was to get a partner like Polecat.)* The banquet was on the following day, Tuesday. The article in the Victoria paper went into detail about our planned trip. I especially liked it because the only other time my name was ever mentioned in the paper was the year it incorrectly reported that I had dropped out of the race. At the banquet, Bill told me he felt a little embarrassed about the article. He also thought that the other racers might give us a cold shoulder for getting more press coverage than the winning team. I saw John Dunn at the banquet and he said he would go for sure, now. When I asked what changed his mind, he answered, "Well, after that article, there's no way I could show my face around here if I didn't go to Freeport." I assured him that we could make the trip and still have time for him to get to the family reunion.

Once the banquet was over, Bill and I headed to the store to pick up provisions. We discovered that it is a mistake to try to get enough food for a journey like that if you are stuffed with a seafood banquet. It just seems like you'll never be hungry again. We picked up about half the provisions we needed and went back to the seawall to begin the final preparations.

By the time we got back to the seawall, John had started preparing the boat and several kibitzers, advice givers, and assorted Safari veterans had gathered around. John told me he wanted to sit in the center seat and since Polecat is always in the bow position, I was given the all important job of STERNMAN, driver of the boat. I felt a little overwhelmed because John Mark had driven the boat during all of our practices and the race. I was honored to be selected for this duty, but since J.M. was my mentor, I felt obliged to follow his example and drive the boat through every overhanging tree, poison ivy patch and wasp nest I could find. We quickly loaded up the supplies; that is, quickly for Bill which meant conversing with whoever was nearby for a few minutes in between securing each item into the boat. John Bugge gave us some Ziplocs to keep the charts dry and offered to let us use his house near Port O'Conner; Phil Bowden loaned us a seat cushion, and everyone gave advice. Lee Deviney advised us to buy a can of lighter fluid and set the boat on fire when we got to Freeport. Some people just don't appreciate that a boat with an award winning decoration.

As I worked on adjusting the foot brace, John and Polecat quizzed Tom Goynes about the location of the old finish line in Freeport. For those readers who have never met Tom, he is the second most experienced safari veteran around (after Owen West) and he is the only active racer who was doing the Safari in 1966-67 when the race went to Freeport. There is also one other thing unique about Tom and that is his ability to tell a great tale if you're not in a hurry. He passed some interesting things on to John and Polecat about the good old days of the race. Tom said that the location of the old

finish line in Freeport was somewhat of a mystery because he had not finished in those years that the race ended in Freeport. But he knew it was up the Old Brazos River from the Intercoastal and that the finish line was a boat ramp at the public park. He was uncertain if the park was on the left or right bank. After an eternity of preparations, we were ready to start. I had so much nervous energy that I was ready to throw the boat in the water and just start paddling. A few final words were exchanged with the on-lookers and we got ready to put the boat into the bay. It was pretty heavy with all the gear and the supply of cokes, ice, juice and other non-safari type food. The drinks and new food supply were a welcome change from the bananas, peanut butter sandwiches, and Gatorade that we had subsisted on during the race. I knew this trip was going to have tasty food if nothing else.

We lowered the boat over the seawall with the assistance of several safari veterans. We got into our seats and tried to be sure that the boat felt stable; then we grabbed our single blades and started the boat moving through the water. With the increased weight of the boat compared to the race weight, I expected that the extra inertia of the boat would make it difficult to paddle. I was pleasantly surprised that the canoe was not too difficult to keep moving. I headed the boat out to the middle of the bay and after a short while, the seawall and everyone up at the pavilion began shrinking into the background. There was virtually no wind and the bay was smooth as silk. I was hoping that this good weather would hold out for the entire trip to Freeport. About this time Bill said to John Dunn, "Hey, by this time last year, we had already flipped the boat a couple of times." John started chuckling about this and proceeded to tell me that the bay was very rough on their trip to Corpus Christi and for much of the journey; they had to paddle from the center of the boat to help keep it upright. After the stories of the Corpus expedition, the next several hours of the trip were some long conversations between Polecat and John; they hadn't seen much of each other since the previous year's trip and I had seen Bill every other weekend since March for practice runs and then had 43 hours talking to him in the race. I really didn't have much left to say to him by that point. If you've never been in a 3 man canoe, it may seem like it would be difficult or rude for the bowman and the center man to have a conversation and leave the driver out of it, but it is actually pretty difficult to have a three way conversation. First, there is usually a little bit of wind hitting your ears which creates a background level of white noise. Next, everyone is facing forward which makes it difficult to hear anyone sitting in front of you but not difficult to hear the person behind you. Finally there are about 6 feet between each seat so it is 12 feet from the bowman to the driver. Add to this both Polecat's and John's voices which are deep and soft spoken and which don't carry well, and it then becomes apparent why the most common question heard in the boat was "Huh, what did you say?"

Throughout our next two days of paddling, we would converse awhile with John in the center passing what Bill said back to me. This would become tedious and then we'd try some two man conversations. Sometimes we would go for over an hour with nothing being said by anyone. After the first day, most of our conversations took place while we had stopped to stretch our legs and snack. The first two landmarks past Seadrift are Swan Point and Mosquito Point. There are some pretty large bay front houses near Swan Point and the rest of the land to the intercoastal is marsh used for cattle grazing. The scenery along this stretch is real similar to the shoreline in Guadalupe Bay except that the far shoreline is a lot further away, giving it a more open feeling. The sun was a little lower in the sky by this time and it seemed cooler in the bay so I used the paddling as a chance to stretch out my back and arm muscles and enjoy the calm waters. Before the trip, I had not spoken much to John except for the 3 or 4 hours that Allen Posnick and I had paddled next to him and Ginsie during the 1991 Water Safari. I did remember that while watching him paddle during that race, he never made a splash with his paddle as it entered the water or while he applied power to the stroke. Paddling with him in the bay reminded me of how impressed I was during our previous encounter. Being in the boat with him, I was even more impressed because I could feel how the boat surged forward as he took each stroke. I came to an immediate understanding of why Joe Mynar wanted him on his team; he's a real strong paddler.

Once we went past Mosquito Point, we came to the intersection of the Victoria Barge Canal and the intercoastal. We followed the buoys and made a left turn to head down the canal towards Port O'Connor. The canal is about 150 feet

wide, dredged to 12 foot depth, and it carries a lot of barge traffic between Houston and Corpus. For much of its length between Mosquito Point and Freeport, the canal is dredged on the north side of the bays of the middle coast of Texas. These bays are Espiritu Santo Bay, Matagorda Bay and East Matagorda Bay. The dredge spoils are deposited on the bay-side of the canal and form a narrow strip of land that offers some protection to boats in the canal. The only stretch of open bay that the canal crosses is in Matagorda Bay from Port O'Conner to the Palacios area. This is a wide open and deep part of the bay that is very treacherous if the winds get strong. At the eastern tip of East Matagorda Bay is the town of Sargent; from Sargent to Freeport, the canal is cut through marshland parallel to the shoreline, anywhere from a few hundred yards to over a mile from the beach. In this stretch it crosses several large and small rivers including Caney Creek, Cedar Lake Creek, San Bernard River and the Brazos.

The barges do not create much wake even when they are large and fully loaded; this is because of their large width, slow speed, and flat bow design. They move just slightly faster than a canoe; if one was moving in the same direction as us; it was usually visible for hours because of our equal speeds. As we headed down the canal, there was a total lack of wind hitting us except for that generated by our speed. It seemed like we were paddling on a wide river, save the lack of current. A short way down the canal, a large crew boat passed us. This one was a 40 footer designed to carry crews to the offshore rigs and move them quickly. It blasted past us at a pretty good head of steam and we got our first chance to take the boat through a bow wake; of course it was no problem for us. A little while later Bill hollered out, "Hey look at that!" and pointed to the land between the canal and Espiritu Santo Bay. Up on the land was a grazing buffalo; if we hadn't had so much food in the boat we might have considered getting a few buffalo steaks. It wasn't but a few minutes later that we took the first of our many leg stretching breaks. It sure felt good to get the circulation into our legs on these breaks but after getting back in the boat, it always took me about 10 minutes to find the same pace and rhythm that I had before we stopped. Most of our conversations took place during these breaks.

We got back into the boat and headed down the canal. There were a few cuts from the canal into the bay and this was the only time we could see how wide Espiritu Santo Bay was; it looked like it was several miles across the bay to Matagorda Island. After paddling a while, we could see a small town ahead on the canal bank. Bill said that it was a fishing camp called Fulghum community; he had flown over it before while going to his rig. As we got closer, I steered the boat right up next to the houses and boat docks; several people were outside enjoying the coolness that approaches the setting of the sun. We got lots of waves and a few questions about where we were going. Bill answered them the same way that he answered everyone else along the way that asked: "We're easin' on down to Freeport!" Night fell about 45 minutes after we passed Fulghum. We decided to run the hour and a half to Port O. without any lights. We could tell that there weren't any large barges behind us and those that approached; we knew we could easily avoid. The pleasure boats were the craft that I worried about because they move so fast and are difficult to see. The lights from the town gave an orange glow to the sky and water and also helped in seeing the boats ahead of us. We encountered two barges that were moving in the opposite direction down the canal. The first one saw us and hit us with a bright spotlight that they use in checking their distance from the banks. It was eerie paddling blind in the general direction of the approaching light but trying to avoid its path. We got past that barge and the second one never saw us, so we weren't hit with the spot. We kept our location very close to the right bank so that we were near the shallow part of the canal; we hoped that the motorboats and barges would keep near the center. As we entered Port O., we first passed some rather impressive industrial structures which are owned by the oil companies working there. The companies' facilities line the left bank of the intercoastal in the town and the right bank is entirely marsh. Bill said that the town a few years ago was mostly a fishing community but now the oil companies are the major economy, with recreational fishing second. We passed a few condos near the intercoastal and a bait store and then we got to the boat ramp. We pulled up there and got out to stretch our legs. When we got out of the boat a couple of guys approached us and asked us where we were heading. We told them about the trip to Freeport and they asked us if we had just finished the Safari. They were acquaintances of a Safari veteran and were aware that race had just taken place. Next, we discussed the weather with them; they told us that the report said the very light winds were going to hold for a few more days; in the morning,

they were going to take a 14 foot flat-bottom to Matagorda Bay if the weather held. They offered to let us sleep in their condo (which sounded like a great idea to me) but Bill politely declined. He and John were purists and they didn't want assistance along the way or the expedition wouldn't be like the "old Safari". After they left we pulled the boat up on the ramp and had some dinner of crackers and fish steaks with applesauce as dessert. With our stomachs now full, we had to decide whether to paddle across the calm bay at night or wait until morning and hope that the wind did not pick up. This part of the bay can get rough because it is so wide and deep and the currents are also a potential problem. There was also a chance that the light winds would die completely and the bay would be like glass by morning. Because none of us had ever been in this part of the bay at night before, we agreed to wait until morning to cross. With this decided, we found a picnic bench next to the boat ramp and laid down to sleep until an hour before sunrise.

Unfortunately, our plans began to unravel somewhat at this time. First the mosquitoes were a little feisty down near the canal and they made sleeping problematical. An hour later, I noticed that there weren't many mosquitoes biting; this was because the wind had picked up to a fairly steady blow. This change of wind worried me and made sleeping difficult. However the wind had one other effect: it stirred up the water enough in Barroom Bay that the flounder giggers all decided to give up. They all headed for the boat ramp, and for a time there was a steady procession of boats and cars, accelerating engines, and tires spinning on the wet concrete. With all this going on, we slept very little that night, probably less than 30 minutes. At about 5:00 we got up and paddled down to the jetty. The steady wind had whipped up the bay, and in the darkness it looked like a vast boiling caldron of ink with blinking lights sprinkled about. We decided to wait until daybreak to cross the bay, and in the meantime we would beach the boat at the jetty and walk up the road a couple of blocks to Stryker's restaurant to get a cup of coffee. We walked through the Amoco facility next to the jetty to take a short cut to the restaurant; Bill knew everybody there because his crew uses that facility as a staging area every week to get off-shore. We got to the restaurant and the sign said it would open at 6:30; Polecat's watch read 5:45. Not being the type to sit around and wait, Bill told us that there was a convenience store in town, "just a little way down the highway." We walked the two blocks to the highway and then turned left and started walking. While on the promenade, Bill was describing in excruciating detail every house and so called landmark along the way. This procession succeeded in getting every dog in the neighborhood riled up and barking at us. After walking about three blocks, there was a restaurant on the right side of the road; Polecat told us how great the Mexican food was there and how, if it was open, would serve really good coffee. We walked on another few blocks and came to a bar and grill establishment; of course it too was closed. By this time John and I were wondering just how far away this convenience store was, so we walked out to the middle of the road and looked for a lighted sign or parking lot. It was definitely not within the next mile. John and I both looked at Polecat and he said, "It sure seems closer when you're driving. At least I was able to give you a walking tour of historic Port O'Conner." With that, we headed back to Stryker's and waited until they opened up.

All of us ordered coffee and we started talking to one of the locals who was listening to the weather report. He said that the wind was at a steady 10 knots and would be picking up during the day to 15. Wind at that speed usually creates a little chop in San Antonio Bay but it makes some big rollers in Matagorda Bay near Port O. We drank our coffee and discussed the game plan on the way back to the boat: we would pass the buoys at the end of the jetties and run parallel to the barge canal for about a mile. Then we would round Bird Island and head for the back of Matagorda Peninsula near the old airstrip. We got back to the boat, donned our lifejackets, snapped on the spray skirt, and pointed the boat out towards the bay. I sucked in one big breath, said a prayer and started paddling. The sun was just starting to show its glow in the clouds, so the bay was still lit by the channel marker lights as well as from the diffuse, morning light. The channel swells were not too bad and it gave us a chance to get used to the pitching of the waves. As we approached the end of the jetties, Polecat spotted a flatbottom boat moving our way and he yelled, "I wonder if it's those two guys we met last night." It was them and a few seconds later they pulled up next to us and said, "The bay's too rough for us; we're going back in." As an afterthought they added, "Good luck." I had this premonition about swimming several miles with the boat and wondered what the heck were we doing crossing this bay if a motorboat driver thought it was too rough. But I knew that if we got past these next couple miles, it would be smooth paddling the rest of the way. We

passed the end of the jetty and the water become rougher almost immediately. Without the protection of the rocks and the nearby land, the wind sounded a lot louder and the waves had nothing to interrupt their journey across the bay. The wave pattern was different from rough conditions in Guadalupe or San Antonio Bay. The current was strong in this deep bay and with the wind blowing across the current, the swells were impressive in height and were further apart than in the other bays. At times the bow of the boat would be plowing into one swell while the stem was up on the crest of the previous swell. John turned on the pump after a few waves broke over the bow; the spray skirt did its job to keep the majority of the water out of the boat. Even so, the pump still worked for an hour and a half before the boat was dry again. I kept the boat pointed toward the waves and maneuvered parallel to the intercoastal and later turned towards Bird Island. We seemed to be making steady progress when we hit a particularly rough stretch of water. I asked John to brace the boat while Polecat and I paddled. This slowed our progress to a crawl so John started paddling again and he put out a brace whenever we started to lose our balance. After we had paddled over an hour we crossed the Matagorda Ship Canal and the currents and swells seemed to intensify. At one point we were passing near a large channel marker which was surrounded by creosote pilings. We were paddling to the left of the pilings and the current swept us in front of the marker so that we ended up passing on the right side. Shortly after passing the marker, we crossed to the leeward side of the island and the swells disappeared so that we were canoeing through small chop the rest of the way.

About this time Polecat pointed out a large house on stilts on the Matagorda Peninsula near the mouth of the ship channel. It was a large structure conspicuous by the fact that it was the only house visible on the land. Bill said that it was John Bugge's place; John had offered us the key to the place and said we could use it for a sleep-over. It is magnificent compared to the usual shacks that most people build on the coast. We headed from the spoil island to the flats on the peninsula near the old airstrip. When we got there, we peeled off the spray skirt and got out to stretch our legs. It had taken over two hours of hard paddling to cross that 6 mile stretch of bay. But it was a great relief to be across the roughest part and all of us felt a bit elated. We took our time eating our breakfast of fish steaks, crackers and coke, stretching our legs by walking along the bay shore. We contemplated walking to the beach but the peninsula was too wide to try to cross at this point to get to the beach.

While resting, we discussed our game plan for crossing the bay. We agreed that it would be best to run the length of the peninsula by taking a line parallel to the shore. Since we were expecting the winds to be blowing in from the gulf, this would give us some protection with the peninsula acting as a wind break. About this time we noticed a helicopter fly out to the gulf; we later found out that it carried Bill's crew to the rig. They were looking for us because Bill had told them that we would be crossing the bay about the time that they would be flying. After our 30 minute break we got into the boat and started down the bay. Matagorda Bay is shape like a giant drumstick. The fat part of the drumstick is towards the west and this was the part we were on. It is 12 miles across to the other side; that section of shoreline runs from Port Lavaca to Palacios. Just past Palacios, the eastern part of the bay is only four miles wide. The entire length of the drumstick is about 28 miles. The eastern portion of the bay is bordered by the Colorado River, with a narrow flood levee separating the river from the bay. We spent a good part of the day canoeing the bay. Our prediction that the peninsula would protect us from the winds was incorrect because the wind had shifted to the southeast and was not blowing in from the gulf. Instead it was almost a direct head wind. We would canoe about a half mile from the shore and would use the points of land for a heading. The points were spits of land about three to four miles apart and were helpful in marking our progress. The headwind created a little chop but it was more a nuisance than a problem. As we paddled we would approach a point and stop to take a break about every two hours. It felt wonderful to get the circulation back into the legs but it was a mentally difficult to get back in the boat. After a few minutes of paddling again, the legs felt like they did before the break. This pattern was repeated continuously during the day: canoe past a couple of points, short break, back into the boat, and paddle past a couple of points. The headwind made it a little monotonous but it was wonderful being in the bay and smelling the salt air. After a good many hours of canoeing point to point John said, "This bay is a lot bigger than any we crossed last year." And he was right; except for the shore just to our right we could not see any other land for most of the trip. We later found out that Ted Slaughter had rented a plane and was flying over the



intercoastal trying to spot us. He never saw us because we had avoided the canal and were instead canoeing the bay. As we canoed this stretch, we talked a lot about previous trips, prior safaris and experiences that we had. Bill told us about the rig he works on 30 miles offshore in the gulf, and he and John discussed equipping a Spencer C-3 with an outrigger and dropping Bill off at his worksite one day. They tried to get me interested in their scheme, but I wouldn't touch it; that was too crazy even for me. Bill started predicting how big the welcoming crowd would be at Freeport when we got there. This speculation continued throughout the rest of the trip. At first, he said that the mayor was sure to read the article in the Victoria paper and would definitely be there to shake our hands and give us the key to the city as we got out of the boat. By the time we were approaching the end of the trip, his prediction included the mayor and the marching band from Freeport High School with Miss Texas, USA on the welcoming committee. I wondered where they would greet us since we were not positive where the old finish line was or exactly how to get there.

We talked to John about what it was like to be in the lead boat in the safari and to win the race. Bill and I have never come close to winning and we never expect to; so it was with a dose of envy that we listened to John's discussion of being in the rarified air at the front of the pack. I was very surprised to learn that as good a paddler as he is, John had never won a canoe race until the 1993 Canoe Marathon and Safari. These conversations would pick up for no particular reason and then die down for a while; there were times that we went 45 minutes without saying a word and then talk for an hour straight. Much later in the afternoon we started getting close to the end of the bay. The houses from Matagorda Beach were visible first, and soon after we could make out the levee between the bay and river ahead. Our pace picked up and in a short while we were in very shallow water but still about a mile from the Colorado River. At one time the only cut from the river to the bay was called Parker's Cut and we were in its general vicinity. About five years ago, a much larger cut was built upstream near the town of Matagorda to divert the majority of the flow into the bay; this diversion helped to reduce the salinity levels in the bay. In order for us to get to the river we would need to find Parker's Cut or paddle up the bay and find the new cut; we opted for the former. The only problem was, we didn't know the location of the cut.

We paddled in the shallow water directly toward the river levee until we came to an area covered with marsh grass. We could see the houses on stilts that line the far side of the river and the cars driving down the road that parallels the river. The marsh looked very thick and we were still about a mile from the river; we decided to try to wade the boat the rest of the way. That shouldn't have been too difficult. It felt good to stand up and use our legs to move the boat at first. But after 50 yards the mud bottom became a soft muck and when our feet sunk down, the oyster shells in the mud cut up our ankles and tried to suck our shoes off our feet. As we moved ahead that short distance, we now saw that the marsh was not a solid field of salt grass. There was a very narrow channel ahead that snaked its way through the marsh. I stood up in the boat to see where it went but all I could see was down to the first bend before it disappeared into the marsh. We paddled down the channel, keeping the boat on the right side just next to the marsh grass: the water was slightly deeper near the edge but still it was barely deep enough to paddle. We continued as the channel made several bends but we could tell from the landmarks that we were moving in generally the right direction. We then came upon several feeder channels that added a few inches of depth to the water. Finally the channel flowed into a much larger channel that flowed directly towards the river. We knew we had found Parker's Cut. We paddled the channel and came to a concrete embankment. This was not what we had expected but we could tell that the river was just a few yards ahead on the other side. We portaged over the embankment down to the river. We later found out that the Corps of Engineers had dammed the old cut after they build the flow diversion upstream; we had portaged over the new dam. It was now 4:00 and it had taken us nine hours to cross the 28 miles. As we entered the river after the portage, the gulf was a mile and a half to our right. We headed to the left. It was a very different feeling being in the river after having spent so long crossing the bay. The river is very wide near its mouth but it felt like the banks were right next to us after having spent so much time in the open bay. The first thing I did was to steer the canoe to the center of the river. This proved to be less than efficient because we were heading upstream. After a few seconds of this Bill reminded me that we should be hugging the shoreline so I quickly moved to within a few feet of the bank. I knew that there were several stores and bait

camps along this stretch of the Colorado so we pulled up on the concrete boat ramp at the first one that we saw. We received the usual stares you'd expect from the locals when three guys in tights that smell horrible get out of a weird looking boat without a motor. I think they considered the boat without a motor to be the strangest thing about us. The bait camp had a pretty good supply of snacks and drinks so we replenished some of our supplies. As we drank our cokes and ate a couple candy bars, we talked for a while to the cashiers about our trip and we asked if there were any restaurants along the river. They told us that there was one just a half mile or so in the direction we were heading. One of the cashiers volunteered a story about a sea-kayaker from Austin that traveled down the Colorado earlier in the year on his way to South America. The locals told him he should move down the coast in the intercoastal but he was afraid of the barges running him over. He decided to travel parallel to the coast, a few hundred yards offshore. He spent a few days at the bait camp then went the two or three miles to the mouth of the river. Apparently he capsized in the swells at the jetties near Matagorda Beach and his body was found a couple days later. We assured her that we were not going to South America, only to Freeport and we would paddled offshore; we got back in our canoe to go to the restaurant.

As we moved upstream, I noticed that the current was ripping pretty good. It finally dawned on me that the heavy rains we encountered on the Safari had also swollen the Colorado. We were not moving very fast but luckily we did not have far to go. We pulled up to the restaurant and beached the canoe before we entered. There were a few locals inside at the bar and we discreetly grabbed a table away from them so as not to offend with our odor. We all ordered burgers and fries and I also ordered a beer. The beer tasted very good but only for a couple of sips. My head was not really together because of the lack of sleep, some dehydration and minimal food; the beer was too potent for me to finish so John drank some too. The food was greasy and hot and real tasty. After getting my stomach stuffed, I was ready to take a long nap but we had to press onward. At this point we were 20 miles from the fishing cabin at Sargent, so I estimated it would take about five hours to get there. Before we left Seadrift, I had told my wife, Veronique to expect us in Sargent at about 8 or 9 o'clock on Wednesday evening. She said she would have some hamburgers barbecued for us when we got there. We left the restaurant close to 7 o'clock so I knew we wouldn't make our original arrival estimate, but midnight was certainly possible. We continued our journey up the Colorado a couple miles to the intercoastal canal, trying to stay next to the fishing piers that lined the bank, out of the strong currents. We inched our way up to the canal, passing the channel that flows into the bay. We turned right at the intersect of the river and the canal and moved past the only set of locks on the entire intercoastal canal. Just beyond the locks is the town of Matagorda. I had looked forward all day to entering this stretch of the canal because it is usually cut off from the winds and the current. Our luck was holding as the winds had increased and had swung around to the east giving us a strong headwind and the current was moving faster than I had ever seen it move in the canal; and it wasn't moving in our direction. We paddled under the pontoon bridge at Matagorda still expecting to make it to Sargent by midnight.

Night fell while we were a few miles outside of town. The battery was dead due to salt water shorting out the pack, out we probably wouldn't have used the lights anyway. Not far from Sargent is a radio tower with the brightest flashing lights on the entire coast of Texas. When night fell we could easily see them almost 20 miles away. They became a hated beacon, always visible but seeming to never get any closer no matter how hard we tried to move the boat.

With the headwinds blowing and current moving against us, our progress was in inverse proportion to the effort we put out. Our heads seemed to function in slow motion and as we continued paddling, our reaction times became slower. There was little conversation except concerning the direction of the boat or obstructions. We crossed paths with a couple of barges and they hit us with their blinding spotlights. As midnight approached, we had only gone ten miles from Matagorda and it seemed like we'd never get to Sargent. Finally Polecat suggested that we stop and get a little sleep. I disagreed, thinking with fatigue induced tunnel vision that it would be possible to push on. Since John also wanted to stop, I was outvoted and we pulled over at the first shell covered area on the bank that we could find. After getting out and eating a little, I realized how tired we were and was glad that we were going to get some shut eye. A barge passed us while we were eating and its wake flooded the lower part of the bank; we were forced to sleep away from the

water's edge, near the marsh grass. I fell into a hard sleep and at about 4 o'clock John woke us up. It was still pitch black and I stumbled around trying to pick up the gear that I had slept on. Bill seemed to be taking his time getting up but I guessed that he was still tired. What I didn't know was that a rattlesnake had slithered out of the marsh and had curled up next to him while he slept. The snake got riled up when John woke Bill up and he started to move. Both John and Polecat heard the rattle and froze. Bill knew he'd have to move eventually and since he couldn't see the critter, he sprang up and away from the sound. After all Bill's jumping around, I still didn't know that a snake was next to us. Finally John turned on the flashlight to spot the snake. It was good size for a coastal rattler, about a 5 footer. I wouldn't want it to sleep next to me. From Matagorda to Sargent, the intercoastal runs parallel to East Matagorda Bay, usually separated by a bank of dredge spoils no more than 20 feet wide. In several places the bank has eroded creating cuts that provide access between bay and canal. The cuts proved very difficult to cross because the strong currents in the canal created a swirl of undercurrents that ripped towards the bay; our lack of lights did not make it any easier to cross these areas. Back when we had left Seadrift and the wind was calm, I thought about crossing this bay rather than staying in the canal because the bay is a lot more scenic. With the wind blowing as hard as it was, we knew that it would have been rough out in the bay so we stayed in the canal.

We packed the gear into the canoe and ate a little snack before shoving off. The wind seemed to have died down a little while we were sleeping, but it still was pretty stiff. Polecat speculated that if the snake had bit him, we would have buried him and kept on paddling. John told him that this was not correct because the ground was too muddy; we would have just stomped him down into the mud rather than burying before heading to Freeport. On the way to Sargent, Polecat described the snake experience to us several times, adding embellishments with each telling. By the time we were to Sargent, the tale was that he had slept in a den of snakes and he woke up with a writhing swarm of them squeezing the circulation out of his poison ivy swollen arm. But they knew better than to bite him because they probably would have died.

As we approached Sargent and the sun had started to rise, I saw my neighbor taking his shrimp boat out into the bay. It was a great feeling to get to Caney Creek and head upstream about a half mile to our place. In the spring, I had canoed the stretch of canal from where we had slept to Sargent on a calm day with John Mark; it had taken us two hours to get to Sargent. With the three of us, it took over three hours to paddle the same stretch. When we arrived at the cabin, we beached the boat on the fishing pier and went inside. The hamburgers that my wife had cooked the night before were waiting for us in the refrigerator. We each wolfed down two or three and drank a couple of glasses of juice. We went upstairs to flop into bed and sleep without having any worries about snakes curling up next to us. It felt like I slept for a couple of days. John and I were sleeping hard and Bill was the first one to wake up. He knew that we would not be easy to get moving, so he leaned over us and said, "Grab your paddle. A canoe just passed us!" A shock like that will have you on your feet before your eyes are open. We stumbled down the stairs and ate a few more hamburgers for lunch. My family had become tired of waiting for us to wake up and had gone to the beach so we left them a note telling that we would call from Freeport after our arrival to get a shuttle ride back. We loaded up the boat with the provisions that we could scavenge from the pantry and headed to the water to take off. We slipped the boat into the water and took off for the final leg to Freeport. It was about noon.

By now we had tunnel vision focused on getting to Freeport and finding the old finish line no matter what got in our way. The wind and current were still giving us a lot of resistance but we were refreshed after the sleep, and we were able to make steady progress. We quickly came to the pontoon bridge at Sargent and headed down the canal towards the San Bernard River. Along this stretch John remarked that our trip had mostly been in the canal and he would have preferred to see more bays. I reminded him that we could have canoed in East Matagorda Bay the night before and fought the waves along with the wind; that would have been a 20 mile stretch of bay instead of canal. John said that the canal had been difficult enough.

The intercoastal cut its way past the Cedar Lakes and along the San Bernard Wildlife Refuge before we reached the San Bernard River. The river was high and muddy. This, in addition to the stiff cross winds created some choppy standing waves in the river that we had to navigate. The river current swept us downstream as we crossed the waves giving us a difficult and unstable ride. The effect of the current also forced us to paddle back upstream along the bank once we had crossed the river. After crossing the San Bernard, it was a pretty short run to the next river, the Brazos. At the Brazos, there is a set of flood gates at each end of the intercoastal. We saw a tug boat pushing a barge through the gates as we approached the river so we decided to beach the boat and scout the floodgates. The gates are about 200 yards long and are located just as the canal enters the river. We were concerned that the gates would be closed if the river was flooding from the recent rains, but this was not the case. The wide river was high and muddy but not high enough to shut the gates. As we scouted we noticed that there were standing waves in the river similar to the San Bernard River crossing, only bigger. We re-entered the boat and fought the current through the first gate and into the river. We rode over the standing waves as the current caused us to side-slip into them. Once we successfully crossed the river we had to work back upstream to get to the intercoastal and then enter the second gate. The gate operator came down and told us that a barge was approaching and that we needed to steer clear of it. She seemed a little annoyed with us for being on the canal. As we had already encountered dozens of barges already, we figured we could handle one more.

After we crossed paths with the barge, we began to approach the Brazosport area and the scenery changed dramatically. From the time we left Port O'Conner up to the Brazos, the largest commercial operations we saw were a couple of bait camps and the entire area was very undeveloped. It was clear that now we were in a different territory. Petrochemical plants and various plant works lined the canal or were within sight of the canal. The great metal towers, condensers and reactors were fantastically different from the miles and miles of marshland and swamp and barrier island we had seen for the past day and half. As we passed a particularly potent smelling plant, John declared, "This is God's country!" That about said it all. An hour and a half after passing the floodgates, we knew we were approaching the Old Brazos River but we weren't sure of its exact location. We only knew it would be to the left as we headed down the canal. Finally we came to a spot that had a canal or river flowing in from the left. It also flowed to the right out towards the Gulf. But a mile or so down the intercoastal was another stream flowing into the canal on the left. Being unsure of which stream to take, we stopped and pulled out the charts; this just added to our confusion. We then decided to canoe across the canal and ask a fisherman for directions. We slipped across the currents to beach the boat a short way from the man and his family. I got out and walked towards them to ask for directions. The kids must have been frightened by the tall guy in tights, with a rank odor approaching them so they ran over to their parents and hid behind them. The fisherman seemed amused and he was kind enough to tell us that the first stream was the Old Brazos River. I thanked him and we got back into the boat to complete the final leg.

We didn't know how far up the Old River we had to go but we heard from Tom that the old finish line was at the boat ramp in the city park. We canoed up the river expecting it to be around each bend. We spent a half hour to pass the Dow Chemical plant; it is extremely impressive as you canoe by. Further upstream we went by scrap metal works and various smaller plants and then went by a large fleet of shrimp boats which filled several marinas. However there was still no boat ramp. Onward we went, paddling through a structure that resembled a giant guillotine. We hoped that it would not be released as we went under it. Next we went by more shrimp boats and seafood processors and then past a swinging railroad bridge like the one above Alligator Lake. Shortly thereafter we approached a fairly high street bridge that crossed the river. John immediately said, "This is it. The boat ramp is just past the bridge." I asked how he could be so sure and he said that he had once read a newspaper article from the year the winners came into Freeport, and the report said that the crowd started cheering as the winners canoed from the bridge to the boat ramp. And he was right; we could see the boat ramp just beyond the bridge.

There were five people watching us as we approached. Polecat swore that one of the girls on the small dock at the ramp was Miss Texas USA. As we slid the boat onto the ramp, we could see that the spectators were a young couple and three teenage girls. The girls looked at us in disgust as we landed the boat and then took off running. The couple just looked bemused and walked away, shaking their heads. So much for the welcoming committee. It was 8:19 pm on Thursday, 131 hours and 19 minutes after we started paddling on Spring Lake. In that time we went 380 miles and saw some things that we'll never see again. 1993 was quite a memorable Safari year; that being said, I don't know if I ever want to have another extended Safari trip again. It might be a little too much of a good thing. John Dunn made it to the family reunion in Nacogdoches the next day, but he did say that his mind kept drifting frequently. Polecat got what he wanted out of the trip: another critter story to tell. I spent the rest of the weekend at Sargent but I didn't get to do much fishing. The first tropical storm of the season blew onto the coast; the storm was the source of all the rough weather we had encountered on the expedition.

## **EPILOGUE**

Bill and John have started speculating about next year's "after safari expedition". They narrowed it down to a couple of different options. In its history, the Safari ended in four different places: Seadrift, Corpus, Freeport, and Port Lavaca. This means that John and Polecat need to go to Port Lavaca to complete the circuit. They also figured out that after we made it to Freeport, they had already canoed the Texas Coast from Corpus to Freeport. With a trip from Corpus to the Rio Grande and another from Freeport to Louisiana, they could complete that circuit also. If you might be interested in some high adventure, call them up and see which of the three journeys they have in mind for 1994. Just don't expect to see me along.

***John (Possom Belly) DuPont***