

The DDRC Current News

Newsletter of the Dallas Downriver Club—Visit our website at www.down-river.org

June 2001



Special points of interest:

- **The Deadline for next month's newsletter is June 30th.** Contact Susan Harkins at 972-470-0195 or via email at: shark@ethos.net. Please send articles, upcoming trips, boating tips and information.
- DDRC board meetings are held every second Thursday. All members are welcome to attend to learn more about club business. Contact club President Alan Tittle at 972-727-3586 or ATatDDRC@aol.com for time and location.



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I Lost a Paddler! (Part 1)

David Lamb

Alan Lamb and Joe Mayfield had a practice ICF K-1 marathon race planned on the Trinity on Saturday afternoon. They started at 1:24 PM at the Sylvan overpass. The practice race was to the south Loop 12 bridge, about 10 miles. Alan was paddling his white decked, Kevlar Hawk and Joe was in a blue decked, Kevlar Orion. Joe had only switched to the high seated, tippy Orion earlier that week. Joe and Alan had been practicing at Bachman Lake from 5:30 - 6:30 to get ready for the U.S. Marathon Team Trials in Wenatchee, Washington that would be on May 19. Joe and Alan each had PFDs in the boats

and their hydration systems installed for the practice race.

Alan immediately blasted out with Joe showing a little early wobbling as he got used to the current.

I walked back to the big black Colony Park wagon with its roof rack antlers and headed through downtown Dallas towards Loop 12. I arrived at Loop 12 in about 20 minutes and parked under the overpass. Pulled out a water jug and my folding chair and traipsed down to the bank of the river. The Trinity was flowing

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Taos Box Trip Report (Part 1)

Glen Hart of Austin, Tx

I spent a great Memorial Day weekend through Tuesday (May 29th) paddling in New Mexico. I met the Dallas Downriver Club in Taos on Saturday, and got a chance to raft the Taos Box Canyon. On Sunday, Jason Kingston, my brother Warren, and I paddled the Pilar Racecourse Section. Then Jason and I went on a self-supported trip down the Rio Chama on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Rafting the Taos Box

I was really excited about having the opportunity to raft the Box. Ray Foley had a spot for me on his oar raft. Because Ray's middle thwarts had not made the trip, he decided he wanted a couple of paddlers on the bow. I took one side, and Mike O'Neill took the other. Mike's teen-aged daughter, Katie, rode in back.

We had a very good water level for the trip, 1,900 cfs. The first half of the trip was a per-

fect warm-up -- just enough rapids and current to be fun. The sheer canyon walls were really impressive. Katie was funny because it was her first raft trip, and she was a little apprehensive about the rapids, especially when we told her that we would soon encounter "Killer Fang Falls". She soon figured out that we were kidding her. We passed under the Rio Grande Gorge bridge, which was quite a sight.

Continued on Page 2

Taos Box, *continued from Pg 1*

The people standing on the bridge looked so small!

The second half of the trip was much more intense. We stopped to see the first major rapid, Powerline, from the rocky shore above. Powerline is a constricted rapid with a big drop and some strong diagonal holes and big waves. I watched several kayakers (and Chris Burt in a C-1) from our group go through. Everyone did great, taking the line close to the big rock on the right, and making it down the tongue of water between most of the holes. Jason Kingston, who had not decided until that morning whether to take on the Box in his kayak, had a good run, riding a few braces as he made most of the rapid on his boat's edge. Our raft passed just to the left of the big rock, in fact so close that the right oar grazed the rock. But we went through great, and what a rush it was as we flew down the rapid and through the waves. Katie had heard that the person on the back can be catapulted by the wave action, and as we looked back, we saw that she had ridden this one on the floor of the raft. Smart move!

After Powerline, the pace really picked up. There were lots more rocks, holes, and gradient. There is a three or four mile section that paddlers call either Pinball and the Rock Garden, which is mostly constant whitewater. Ray set us up on some great lines, and Mike and I worked together well as a team using draws, etc. to help make the quick turns needed to avoid the holes and rocks. It was pushy, wet, tiring, and a blast!

Jason, who has only been paddling a little over a year, had a great day on the Box. He made it through some really tough rapids and said that he learned a huge amount. In the busy section, he hit just about every hole. I gave him the nickname "Hole Seeker" for the rest of the trip.

The last rapid, which is right before the takeout, is Sunset. It was a good drop ending with a rock on the left that has a rooster-tail flowing over it. Well, we got a little close to the rooster rock, and I hit the pillow wave full force and found myself with everything but my right leg out of the raft. I somehow held on, and Ray and Mike pulled me back in. And of course all this was caught on 35mm by the local photo vendor.

This being my first real experience in whitewater rafting, I found that it required more proactive paddling than I had expected. We did well and had a great time. And I must admit that when Katie said "Y'all were awesome!", my hat size increased a couple of notches!

The DDRC club was great. There were so many nice and interesting people. And they have so many rafters -- I think in all there were seven or eight rafts. They were well organized and experienced at this kind of trip. Kudos to Rich Grayson, who was a tremendous leader!



Next Meeting:
Thursday, June 21st, 2001.
Enchilada's Restaurant, 6526
E. Northwest Hwy

See you there!

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Fatal Mishap on Rio Grande...

Abe Jacobson, Los Alamos

On 28 May, a rafter died on the popular "Pilar" or "Race Course" run on the Rio Grande in northern New Mexico. What follows is a distillation of eyewitness (though after-the-fact) observations supplemented by discussions with the BLM (who manage the river) and the owner of Rio Grande River Tours, a commercial outfitter.

Below about 1500 cfs, this run is rated a III or III+, but at higher levels it is rated a IV-. On 28 May the flow was a brisk 2500 cfs. At this level the entire "Narrows" sequence of rapids, about 1/2 mile long, blends together into an extremely long, energetic flume with large steep waves peppered with semi-sticky hydraulics.

Sometime after 10 AM, a four-person, one-raft private party entered a preliminary rapid called "Eye of the Needle", formed by three large boulders. At 2500 cfs, the water pours over these boulders and forms a hydraulic on the downstream side. There is a raft "highway" either to right or left, and it is most unusual for a raft not to move to one side or the other. Even if it went into the hole, most rafts could punch through with proper momentum.

Apparently the raft went into this hole, capsized, and dumped the four occupants in the hole. The hole is not super-retentive. Two managed to swim to the shore, one to either side of the river. The other two washed downstream. The hole is about 200 meters above the start of the Narrows; that distance is enough for a motivated and competent swimmer to attain the shore. The water is moving very fast but is still laminar; the river there is about 20 meters wide.

A commercial raft picked up the two stranded swimmers and proceeded downstream, through the long Narrows

flume, and found the other two people on river left at the large high-water eddy lying below the Narrows. One was rendering rescue breathing to the victim, 57-year-old Margaret Coyne, who had apparently filled her lungs with water during the long and turbulent swim. The victim was neither conscious nor breathing.

Apparently the victim and her fellow swimmer had swum/floated the entire narrows. The victim was unconscious and was not breathing. Guides from Rio Grande River Tours, all swiftwater-rescue-certified, administered CPR and rescue breathing while EMTs arrived from the highway above. Despite heroic efforts by both the raft guides and the EMTs, the victim died, the apparent cause being drowning.

The Albuquerque Journal (30 May) reported eyewitness reports that the victim's PFD was a light-duty "waterskier's" device. In this writer's view, it is possible that this marginal PFD contributed to her difficulties. Nonetheless, this writer points out that anyone venturing onto a spring high-water river rated III or IV, particularly with a long continuous rapid, should realize that swimming a thunderous, long rapid bears little resemblance to more ordinary swimming situations. This is particularly true of raft passengers, who may go for months or multiple seasons without experiencing a full-blown trashing in the rapids, and then is lulled into a false sense of security. However, this writer acknowledges that a 30-pound-buoyancy, Coast Guard class-5 PFD would have certainly helped. The important thing to realize is that no PFD is a panacea. The water was not particularly cold (perhaps 60F), so this writer questions whether cold-water shock played a role. This writer suspects instead that for rafters, the first swim (of a season, or perhaps a multi-year period) may be a very big transition from what had seemed very secure. (Unlike for folks who work their way up through canoeing and kayaking and frequently swim along the learning curve.)

Paddler Lost *continued from pg 1...*

pretty well that Saturday. I Parked my rear down and enjoyed the sights and sounds. A trio of kids came over and started fishing a bit. They quickly got bored and left. Suddenly at 2:32 PM I spotted Alan coming around a curve towards the takeout. He got there at 2:33:30. His time for the 10 miles was a blazing 1:09:30. As he needed to practice portaging for the team trials, Alan got out, threw the Hawk on his shoulder and started running for the wagon. I followed and unlocked the car so that he could put up some of his gear and then returned to the bank to wait for Joe. Alan came down a little later, drew a long, cool drink from the water jug and lay down and rested. He was quite pleased with his time. Alan talked about seeing a couple of fisherman and how much fun it was to paddle near downtown under all the bridges. We kept waiting and talking. Time was going by. What had happened to Joe? We had a kayak polo practice scheduled at Rheudasil Pond in Flower Mound for 6:00 PM that afternoon and we were using up our time margin.

When Joe's elapsed time was twice Alan's, Alan went to get his boat, paddle, PFD and first aid kit. I told Alan to paddle all the way back upstream to Sylvan if he had to, but to find Joe. We assumed that the Orion with its high seat had been too much for Joe. Since there was a good chance that Joe would be using an Orion at the team trials the next Saturday, this was of great concern. We certainly did not want Joe to embarrass himself. Joe had been racing ICF K-1 for less than one month, and had made great progress.

At 4:00, I called my wife Nancy to warn her that I might have to ask her to call the kayak polo team members to cancel practice and that I had set a 4:30 deadline for calling off practice. The deadline passed and I had to make the call. Nancy called the team members and told them that the practice was off. Joe's dad, Charlie, Marsha Harner (our coach) and Nancy (with Rachel) started towards Loop 12. Evelyn Lamb stayed by my phone at home to relay messages. Charlie's wife, Kathleen stayed by their phone to relay a possible call from Joe. I had to stay put at Loop 12 as time was passing by. Plus, the river was rising.

At 4:45, Alan showed back up at the Loop 12 overpass without Joe. Alan had been up to the I45 bridge and had spoken with the pair of fishermen on the bank. They said that Joe had passed them not long after Alan had passed. Then it struck home! Joe had gotten by when I was unlocking the car for Alan when Alan had showed up. I had underestimated Joe! Alan was doing 1 minute per mile better than Joe the previous week on an eighteen miler from 121 down past LBJ to the

park near Luna road. But, this day, Joe was only 30 seconds per mile slower than Alan!

At least we knew where to look. There are four bridges after Loop 12. Three have good takeouts. Belt Line Road was the one exception. Alan put back in the water to run to I20 bring Joe back. I was still alone and had to stay at the Loop 12 takeout until assistance arrived. Around 5:30, Charlie, Nancy, Rachel and later Marsha Harner, Alex Harner and a friend showed up. All had boats on their cars to use for searching if need be. Charlie and Nancy stayed put. We exchanged cell phone numbers. I sent Marsha Harner to check Malloy Bridge Road and Belt Line Road takeouts. Rachel and I went to Dowdy Ferry and I20. While driving towards Dowdy Ferry, the Sable wagon started spewing transmission fluid out the back. I stopped at a service station on Dowdy Ferry and purchased several quarts of transmission fluid. Marsha called in that Joe was not at Malloy Bridge. Rachel and I checked Dowdy Ferry, but there was no sign of Joe. Marsha called in that Joe was not at Belt Line. I told Marsha to meet back at Loop 12. Rachel and I checked I20, but no Joe. The next bridge after Malloy Bridge road is 20 or 30 miles down the Trinity! Rachel and I headed back towards Loop 12. We had to take the old Central expressway because the silver Sable wagon was really starting to have transmission troubles by then. We could just barely get going. We nursed the wagon up the hill on Loop 12 before the Trinity and coasted down to park with the other folks.

Alan had not gotten back from I20 yet and still no Joe. At 7:30 PM, some six hours after the boys left on their 10 mile practice run, we had neither one of them. I had to run down and get more transmission fluid. Nancy called 911. Marsha drove to the Dowdy Ferry road bridge to wait. I drove to the Belt Line Road bridge to wait. Alan showed up at 7:45, but without Joe! Back under Loop 12, the fire department showed up. They inflated their search boat and put in to start looking downstream. And we had to continue waiting. It was getting dark. I had parked on the old Belt Line road overpass. I could see what looked like foot steps down on the bank. I turned on my parking lights, hoping that a paddler could see a glimmer of my car if paddling by. I honked my horn briefly each minute hoping that Joe would hear the horn and come towards me. The Belt Line takeout would be a mother to get him out. It was an easy half mile of thick brushy, boggy terrain to get to the road grade from the river. But if Joe got there, we would at least know that he was safe. It was after sunset, 8:45. It was going to be a long night for all involved. ■

June Schedule of Events

- **Every Wednesday Nite**—DDRC Roll, Paddle, and Rescue sessions 5:00 pm to dark at Lake Grapevine, Rockledge Park. Contact Keith Smith (940) 566-4869.
- **Every Saturday, 10:00 am**—Roll Classes in Kaufman. Contact Rand Oliver: 972.530.7307 for more information
- **June 2—Saturday, Brazos River Moonlight Paddle**, Brazos River below Whitney Dam. Contact Bonnie Haskins, (972)254-9672, or Jerry Johnson at (817) 267-5375 or email: jjohnsn@airmail.net.

July Schedule of Events

- **Every Wednesday Nite**—DDRC Roll, Paddle, and Rescue sessions 5:00 pm to dark at Lake Grapevine, Rockledge Park. Contact Keith Smith (940) 566-4869.
- **Every Saturday, 10:00 am**—Roll Classes in Kaufman. Contact Rand Oliver: 972.530.7307 for more information
- **July 7—Saturday, Brazos River Moonlight Paddle**, Brazos River below Whitney Dam. Contact Bonnie Haskins, (972)254-9672, or Jerry Johnson at (817) 267-5375 or email: jjohnsn@airmail.net.

July 2001

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 Roll Clinic	5	6	7 Moonlight Paddle
8	9	10	11 Roll Clinic	12	13	14 Roll Clinic
15	16	17	18 Roll Clinic	19	20	21 Roll Clinic
22	23	24	25 Roll Clinic	26	27	28 Roll Clinic
29	30	31				

As a participant in any DDRC activity, an individual assumes the responsibility of evaluating all inherent risks before participating and assumes any risk of death or injury inherent in the sport. The participant waives claims that may arise against the club, its officers, members, servants, agents and/or trip coordinators, for death or injury to person or property, including claims of vicarious liability and claims arising from civil recklessness or any degree of negligence. Not waived are claims against an individual who causes injury intentionally or with criminal recklessness and claims among driver, owner and passengers of a motor vehicle for injuries.

Newsletter news...

Susan Harkins—Newsletter Editor

A year ago, I agreed to be the DDRC Newsletter editor. I started with the July 2000 edition and at that time, decided to make a commitment of one year.

My year is coming to a close. I intend to stay on board for the August newsletter (the August newsletter is the main Trinity River Challenge edition and it would not be fair to give to a green editor).

Since taking on the newsletter I have established a "style" and have a pretty good archive of material in Microsoft Publisher. Many of the drawings, artwork, etc. that appear in the newsletter has been established and will not need to be recreated.



Since I don't want to leave the club hanging, I will do the following things to make the transition to the new editor easier: I will donate a copy of Microsoft Publisher to the club for the new newsletter editor to use (this means that the new editor needs to have a PC with Windows and not a Mac). I will also provide support and training for the month of September. I will also be "on call" for a couple of months to answer questions, etc.

Unfortunately, I work on a computer all day at work, and my job is fairly stressful. It's gotten harder and harder for me to put in the computer time at home for the newsletter as well (my neck does

not appreciate that much typing).

If anyone in the club wants to improve their publishing skills or writing skill, working on the newsletter will definitely do that, plus give you a portfolio of newsletters to show a potential employer.

I'm sure that there is someone out there who can take this on and do a wonderful job. The newsletter is a life line of sorts to our club membership, and provides a way for all of us to keep informed about trips, boating, and river events, as well as environmental issues. Please consider volunteering for this very important job!!!!



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DDRC Classified Notices

For Sale

Winona Prism 17.5" Solo Kevlar Canoe
Great Shape, Low Miles, asking \$1200.00
Contact Rand Oliver at 972.530.7307

Club Officers and Committee chairs needed:

The following club officers and committee chairs are needed due to resignation, people moving away, etc. Please get involved in the club and volunteer for something,!

Newsletter Editor
Membership
Raffle (need two people)
Volunteers and help for the Trinity Rive
Challenge

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Contact Marvin Dietel to change your personal information on the roster, or Susan Harkins receive this newsletter via email AND IN COLOR!

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