

**THE JOURNEY IS THE
REWARD**

2006 Texas Water Safari
“Worlds Toughest Canoe Race”

A tale of endurance and hardship along the
Guadalupe and San Marcos Rivers

Written by Kyle Frazier
Inspired by Erick Frazier
Captained by Stuart Frazier

Are we there yet?

A look into the life of Twin brothers Kyle and Erick as they prepare for their most difficult challenge to date. The Texas Water Safari. A 267 mile Canoe Race from San Marcos, TX to the Gulf of Mexico. Captain for this crew is their go-to-guy Stu. Stay tuned for his captain's log.


MONDAY, MARCH 20, 2006

A Safari of Sorts

Why do people do the things that they do? What drives people to complete a Marathon, hike a Fourteener, sail around the world, sky dive and risk life for the thrill of a life time? I think it's ADVENTURE. It's always different strokes for different folks when it comes down to picking your poison, but underneath it all is a drive and ambition that loves the feel of accomplishment and the promise of that eternally sought adventure.

For Erick and I, talk is sometimes cheap. Sure, we've climbed a fourteener in our day, jumped from airplanes, dove from towers with chord around ankles, jumped from bridges that led to emergency rooms.... well I suppose we have had an adventure or two! I guess it comes as no surprise that we are now preparing for the next adventure. One that I fear we are ill equipped to complete at this day in time, yet one that we will embark upon for better or worse.

The name of the game is the Texas Water Safari. This race is touted as the "World's toughest Canoe Race." I'm not sure who decided this and how it came to be, but I like the sound of it! A 267 mile canoe race from San Marcos, TX to the Gulf of Mexico. From log jams to rapids, cottonmouths and arachnids this journey has fun for the whole family! Or maybe the family ought to sit this one out. We'll keep you posted as the journey unfolds. Meanwhile keep your seat there on the sidelines where the view is much safer. Stay tuned...

posted by frazier k | [8:11 PM](#) | [1 comment](#) 

TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2006

Back to the Beginning

I want to take ya'll back to the beginning and try to get us caught up in the coming weeks. I'll start with mine and Erick's first journey into the unknown and then bring you up to date.

Luling to Tall Bridge



10-11-2005

Distance: 21.5 miles

It typically doesn't get any more green than this! By green I'm talking about the cumulative experience that Erick and I share as river runners. Some might prefer the terms Rookie, Poser or Wanna-be, but they all share the same lack of experience.

We've got a pristine Alumnacraft 5-rib aluminum canoe. Complete with modified seats on slide adjustments thanks to Duane at T.G. Canoe Livery. The only problem is that we're still not quite sure what we're doing. It can't be that hard though right! You drop the boat in the water and keep the nose pointed down river. Well, by the end of our maiden voyage we had expanded our knowledge of canoe basics exponentially. Some things we learned on that trip from Luling to Tall Bridge...

1) If you brush against an overhanging limb or drift into a fallen tree, the question is not weather or not you've acquired a new river spider, rather it's how many are now in the boat! I spent more time smashing spiders from the back than steering the boat! If you don't know already, I have a fear of spiders. It's that simple. Put me in a pit full of snakes and I'll be right as rain, drop a spider in my boat and its removal becomes priority number one.

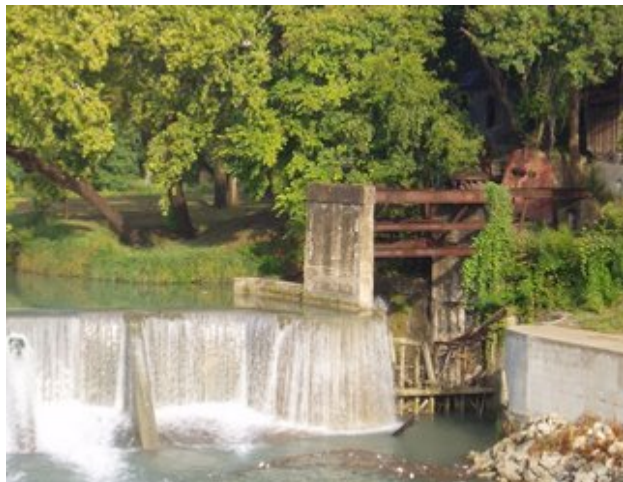
2) Driving one car that can accommodate canoe transportation entails a lot of vehicle shuffling. This is where we really wish we had a designated driver! See if you can follow along. Erick and I both leave Austin driving separate cars. I have the canoe with me as we drive to the end destination. Upon arrival, Erick jumps in my car and leaves his behind. Now we start up to where we will put the canoe in the water and begin our river run. Upon arrival, the canoe is unloaded and while Erick stays with the boat, I drive the canoe carrying vehicle back to the finish line where we will need it later. Now I leave my vehicle behind and jump into Erick's parked car to meet him back at the starting point.

3) We finally know what a log jam looks like. We had read about these obstacles from other Safari accounts but weren't quite sure what we would find. It's not wise to charge these random accumulations of log and river debris at full speed. Trust me.

4) Ottine Dam. One of the most dangerous portages on the Safari route. We took a few pictures but agreed that the real danger here is primarily at high water levels and due to the abruptness in which it appears.

5) I would NOT recommend trying to portage out at Tall Bridge. You can see from the photo that we had some serious elevation to climb in order to pull that blasted boat from the water and get her up to the road. It probably wouldn't have been too bad if there was some semblance of a trail, but no such luck. Thank you mother nature for my first introduction to Poison Ivy!

We learned a few good lessons this time out. Primarily that we have a long road ahead and need some serious practice. Tired and sore we made our way home.



posted by frazier k | [9:00 PM](#) | [0 comments](#) 

SATURDAY, MARCH 25, 2006

San Marcos to Staples



11-26-2005

Distance: 16.5 miles

San Marcos is ground zero for where the Texas Water Safari begins. Erick and I decided to take a practice run here since we will need to be intimately aware of river features and how to approach them quickly in order to cut time. November is not the most ideal month for playing in the water, but due to our mild winter it wasn't half bad!

Again, we took what we've learned thus far and built upon that foundation. This particular run is approx. 16 miles and quite active as people train for the safari. The best part about having some experience on the water is being able to watch what other enthusiast are doing and see how they handle some of the various rapids or portages.

Some things we learned on our 16 mile run...

- 1) We spend way too long taking pictures and moving around portages, we've got to get our move-on!
- 2) As much as I hate going from dry to wet to dry to wet again, this event requires some constant movement in and out of the boat to maximize efficiency at rapids and portages. We're starting to get this and see some drastic improvement.
- 3) When you see a fork in the river, keep right. Otherwise you'll end up as we did paddling up the Blanco River for a good mile before realizing things don't seem right. A sign would have been useful here. Lucky for us we had a cell phone and called to consult the Oracle. That's Duane by the way, our go-to-guy who sold us the boat.

4) This stretch of river is extremely windy. We need some serious practice



riding currents and being able to steer the boat around hairpin turns. We'll be back for more practice here.

5) Spiders are everywhere. I've got to embrace this simple fact.

6) If the urge to pee comes every 10 minutes, than

you're low on sodium and/or electrolytes. Be sure to balance your water intake with some source of sodium or liquid that the body will absorb instead of passing through.

posted by frazier k | [7:20 PM](#) | [0 comments](#) 

MONDAY, MARCH 27, 2006

Staples to Luling



January 2, 2006
Distance: 28 miles

At this point Erick and I are really starting to feel like we're getting the hang of this canoe thing. The twists and turns of the river are starting to look more predictable. The movement of the water is beginning to take shape as we attempt to keep our boat moving along the subtle currents. Our launch at Staples Dam was uneventful. We paused to observe how best to portage here on race day but were off and moving in no time. Our total travel distance was to be 28 miles and is notorious for its log jams.

We rigged a very basic hydration system that I wanted to test for this run.

It consisted of two 1-Gallon jugs of water with a small hole pressed into the plastic tops. Into those holes, I pressed a clear plastic tube to draw water from the jug and deliver to the front and rear seats. This would allow us to focus the weight in the center of the boat and free up our hands from picking up drinking bottles. Our race day version will be something similar with permanent jugs and a secured water delivery system. Bite valves will open the flow of water into our mouths.

Also on this trip I installed some better straps and fasteners to keep our equipment in place. Little did we know that we were going to need em this time around!

It wasn't long into our trip when we encountered our first delay. And by "not long" I mean 30 minutes. Let me also emphasize here that this is no small delay. In fact, at one point during this ordeal I saw the dream of our race day slipping away.

There really isn't much water moving down the river due to the lack of rain we've gotten in central Texas, and the rapids we encountered were far from aggressive. However, between the two of us, we managed to pin our shiny boat into what is called a sweeper. A fallen tree that collects debris as the river current runs through it. The problem is that we were not supposed to go through this sweeper but around it. To further compound our little problem, my front man whom ya'll may know as Erick, decided to lead us straight for this exciting little obstacle against my own reservations. I blame him :-).



The drama unfolded like this. The current pulled us quickly into the main log that created this sweeper on our broadside. The collision with the log caused us to lean into the current which quickly filled our boat and pinned us against this log while at the same time carrying our equipment on down

the river. As Erick scrambled downstream to collect our gear, I stood on a sand bar piling up what was left of our now soaked provisions. Two cell phones, most of our food, water and maps were compromised in this debacle.

It may not look like much, but neither does the moon from far away! Yet still, there we were looking at our first serious predicament. We tried everything to pry, push, prod and budge our fast stuck vessel but to no avail. In fact the water had our boat pinned so tight that any attempt to pry was resulting in severe collateral damage to the aluminum structure. Short of leaving our boat we didn't know what else to do. After looking at our GPS we realized that hiking out of there could take several hours to reach the closest town. Furthermore, we would not accept defeat nor leave our boat behind.

Solution, build a dam to divert the current and release pressure on our craft. I put Erick to work carrying the heavy rocks due to his primary involvement in the cause of our predicament. Not really, we both piled the rocks and drift wood for a good hour until we had stacked enough debris to divert the water, which was tuff to do considering the velocity of this current. We had an increasingly difficult time locating rocks big enough to stack without being washed away in the swift current.

The improvised dam did the trick. We were able to pry our boat free and asses the damage incurred. It wasn't pretty, but the boat still floats and off we went. Both water jugs were swept away leaving us with a one liter bottle that I brought for back up. We had not yet traveled 3 miles when this hole drama unfolded! Thirsty, tired, hungry, frustrated and moderately defeated we pressed on.


Further down the river we began passing some partially decomposed animals ranging from cows to wild pigs. Not real sure what that means, but I hope it's not the water that's killing these things! Come to think of it, I've noticed some abnormally heavy loss of hair and an increase in stomach mass since we started spending time on the river. Ha, I think that's just evidence I'm turning 26 next month and getting old!!!

We also passed through a couple of open water sections where some visibly annoyed cows/bulls decided to stampede across the river before us leaving Erick and I moderately concerned about one of these big steaks crashing into our boat!



Anyways, let me tell you what we learned on this Trek...

- 1) How to flip a canoe. We hope to never have a repeat of this scenario but if so, we're prepared!
- 2) Ziplock bags and empty coffee cans are NOT waterproof. I believe that we may opt for an actual Dry bag storage system our next go round.
- 3) Don't take both of your cell phones with you on the boat. I'm not sure why we thought this was a good idea! Both incurred some water damage and made checking in with our wives a bit difficult!
- 4) Nylon handles fixed to the front and back of the boat would make portages much easier to navigate.
- 5) Use your body as much as the boat to get down stream. Using agility to jump out and push at low water points will save a lot of time scooting and sliding along the bottom of the river.
- 6) When night falls on the river it is DARK. LED head lamps don't do squat and visibility for us was about 10' resulting in numerous back ups and collisions.
- 7) Don't forget to check in with your wife! Due to the water damage incurred to our phones we didn't check-in as scheduled. The delay on the river also set us back almost two hours from when we were scheduled to finish. This worried our wives for some reason when after dark they still had not heard from us. Go figure.

posted by frazier k | [3:41 PM](#) | [0 comments](#) 

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29, 2006

San Marcos to Staples II

San Marcos to Staples Dam

February 11, 2006

Distance: 16.5 miles

We never would have thought that a second trip down the same stretch of river could produce such better results for us than the first! However, if you take into account the frequency we stopped our first time down to photograph portages and a wrong turn up the Blanco River it's not all that hard to imagine really.

We felt that a solid understanding of this stretch of river was crucial for race day. It's the first 16 miles of the race and we're anticipating a great deal of density with boats packed into this narrow flow. This stretch is also extremely difficult for us newbies to navigate due to the degree of river cut backs and horse shoe turns. It's all over the place! We're just trying to find our currents and let the river do most of the work for us. However, I did notice myself getting tired much earlier on this particular day from the effort I exerted in moving the boat around the various turns. I spent as much time performing corrective strokes and I did forward movement strokes. The problem here, is that a corrective stroke from the back of the boat does not create a beneficial force moving in the right direction. A corrective stroke pulls the stern end of the boat to the port or starboard side in a left/right motion. It also requires more physical effort while coming around a sharp turn to keep out of the sweepers and low hanging limbs. Did I mention that low hanging limbs equals A TON OF SPIDERS! So you better believe I'm paddling hard to keep out of there. I need to practice quite a bit here. I was almost as tired after these 16 miles as I was on one of our much longer routes. And we've got a long way to go from Staples!


Our portages were drastically improved. The first at Rio Vista Dam was less than a minute. We came up quick on the dam and while Erick rolled out and slid down the concrete front, I rode it up to the edge before rolling out myself. Erick was already at the base ready to intercept the canoe and reposition the vessel on the river. He was in his bow spot and I shoved us

off and into the main flow of water coming over the dam in order to use the current for pointing us down stream. Not bad! Add several dozen boats trying to do that at the same time and it could get a little crazy.

We stopped very little from then on and ate small snacks while moving down stream. We arrived at Staples Dam, the first race check point, in 3hrs 45 minutes. On race day we must cross this check point within 6hrs or be disqualified from the race. Our avg speed down the river was 4.5 mph. If we maintained this pace non stop all the way to sea drift, we would finish in approx. 59 hrs. Not bad at all! Except there is no way we can keep that pace for 267 miles! We still need to cut some serious time off this first leg. I would prefer to see us cross Staples closer to 3hrs.

Take aways...

1. Agility is still going to be key in keeping the boat moving. We need to stretch well before beginning a paddle.
 2. I will need proper water shoes. My old tennis shoes continue to fill with rocks and mud in addition to keeping my feet wet most of the time.
 3. A bilge system would be nice. I'm getting a bit tired of emptying the contents of our canoe so that we can tip it over and dump the accumulation of water.
 4. Use corrective paddle strokes as conservatively as possible. Keep the force that your paddle applies moving the boat down stream which is where you need to be going instead of side to side which is wasted energy.
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posted by frazier k | [6:36 AM](#) | [0 comments](#) 


FRIDAY, MARCH 31, 2006

A Boat Without a Name

We've gone far enough on this boat with no name. It has taken us through some of the most treacherous obstacles the dangerous San Marcos River can throw and yet we've given her no name. Our vessel deserves more than this. In fact, we need your help. Erick and I have tossed around a few ideas but wanted to broaden our exposure to brilliant minds and post an APB to

all those reading our blog. That's right, I'm talking to both of you! Ha, I hope there's more than two! Regardless, here are a few suggestions we've thrown on the table. Feel free to throw a few possibilities our way.

- Sojourner
- Stamina
- Are we There Yet
- sabbatical
- Kyle's Cruiser
- Bess
- gemelos locos

posted by frazier k | [8:24 PM](#) | [2 comments](#) 

FRIDAY, APRIL 14, 2006

So What's a Portage?

The question has come up more than just a few times. I think it might be appropriate to answer this question considering I had no idea prior to running the rivers what a portage, log jam or sweeper really looked like.

Webster defines portage in a couple of ways. The word itself means the **"labor of carrying or transporting."** As it relates specifically to boating Webster also defines it another way; **"the carrying of boats or goods overland from one body of water to another or around an obstacle (such as rapids, log jams, dams, spillways, etc.)"**

Along the San Marcos River and Guadalupe there are at least 13 known portage points. These are places such as Ottine Dame, Luling Dam and other water/flood control points along the way. We have had some practice on these portage points in order to increase our efficiency of negotiating the obstacles.



In addition to the fixed portage points, there will also be other situations we might need to portage. During the season where we get little to no rain, the water level drops a bit. This will expose rocks and areas where the water is too shallow to boat through. We will jump from the canoe and drag/push our way through these areas before reboarding.


We will also encounter log jams. A log jam is created most often during high rain seasons. The movement of large volumes of water causes erosion to happen along the banks of the river. As the dirt erodes, there are some incredibly large and old trees that fall into and across the river. When this happens it creates a sweeper. Sometimes you can navigate around these sweepers and other times you can't. The fallen tree acts like a giant filter and accumulates anything from trash to various other types of driftwood and smaller fallen trees or branches. This junk piles up to form a log jam. These areas can also be incredibly dangerous depending on how fast the water is moving through the sweeper. You don't want to get caught underneath one of these obstacles. At times, you are forced to deboard your vessel and carry it around the obstacle. Hence the term portage. We don't have any pictures of an actual log jam at this time, but you can see what the most common type of portages we will encounter look like from the pictures.

Personally, I hate log jams for a variety of reasons. Most notably however, is the habitat for spider and snakes that it provides. Never mind the inconvenience of them, I just don't like associating with the enemy. By enemy I'm talking about these crazy river spiders. Log jams don't just provide habitat for the long skinny river spiders that live in colonies of 4-5 million, but for those big ugly loner spiders that don't spin webs. They hunt! They sneak up on their unsuspecting prey and pounce! And at night, I've heard from previous veterans that when you encounter one of these log jams it's best to kill the head lamps and just climb on through. A flash of light across one of these spider habitats illuminates millions of little glowing spider eyes. Why do they have so many eyes anyways!

Most of your energy can be consumed by these laborious portages and that is why an overall physical fitness is important. The boat will be heavily weighed down with gear and provisions. So not only do you need a paddle

endurance to survive on the river, but you need a well rounded physical aptitude as well!



posted by frazier k | [6:52 AM](#) | [0 comments](#) 

FRIDAY, APRIL 21, 2006

A Lake Austin Session

Mayfield Park on Lake Austin

April 20th, 2006

Distance: 5+ miles

duration: 1 hour 15 minutes

It was an evening that we had scheduled to tackle the hamster wheel. Not a course that I look forward to, but one that has served to build up our paddle proficiency quite a bit. However, off in the hill country there was a storm brewin. Not just one, but a series of storms that brought along with them some decent sized hail and lots of lightening. We had decided to cancel our paddle practice when out of nowhere a break in the clouds occurred around 6pm and the sun lit up the landscape. It was all the reason we needed to head for the water!

Before leaving we checked the doppler on weather.com and realized we wouldn't have this calm atmosphere for very long. In light of those circumstances we chose a place that we could keep close to shore in the event we needed to make a quick exit. I convinced Erick that Mayfield Park would be a great place to go and one we had yet to explore. This Park is not designed to launch a boat from and did require a bit of hiking to reach the lake, but good experience in land portaging!

After a short hike and some maneuvering of our canoe through the forest we arrived at a small day dock hidden in the trees. As we pushed off from the small wooden dock at lake shore our boat cut through the glassy surface of the water and quietly slid towards the center of the cove. I knew at that moment we had made the right decision. It is hard to describe what the weather was like and I wish that we had brought the camera, but everything just felt right. A fog hung just above the water and there were no other boats in sight. Of course not, there was another hill country thunderstorm heading our way. But not yet, not now. The sun was setting and casting a myriad of colors across the lake and I felt blessed to be a part of that moment.

It was not a long paddle practice for us, but we'll take what we can get. After exploring a number of coves and canals we executed a few paddle sprints and then made our way back to Mayfield Park to end our time on the water as dark storm clouds once again began to converge overhead.

One positive thing we managed to do was perfect the radio set up. Remember, the \$30 radio that I bought from the pawn shop? Well, we brought a CD this time and a remote control. We placed the radio in one waterproof dry sack and the remote in another to keep them both free of water penetration. It worked like a charm. We didn't play the stereo much this time due to the pleasant peacefulness on the water, but the next time we hit that hamster wheel it'll be jammin!

posted by frazier k | [9:21 PM](#) | [0 comments](#) 

A Word from the Bow Man

I thought it was high time that I chime in at this point with some words from the front man in this operation. Not really sure how I came to be the front man but here I am, the power rower in this duet, bringing up the front. You can call me the hood ornament. My job is pace setting. Kyle watches for my pace to coordinate and calls “huts” from the back. Every time Kyle calls a “Hut” we switch sides with the paddles.

Now there have been a couple of comments made by Kyle, the primary blogger, which some might interpret as jabs or cuts towards me, the front

man. And while there is SOME truth to the comments it certainly goes both ways. As Kyle mentioned he has a terrifying fear of spiders. We have found ourselves multiple times in precarious situations because my rudder (Kyle) is busy doing the "spider in my pants dance" in the back of the boat while oblivious to any impending perils that we might be facing. Another funny trick he does is once the sun sets he tends to splash my back with water every 20 strokes or so. It's not terribly annoying but it does start to get on my nerves.

All things considered, I think we make a pretty strong team. We have much work to do but will certainly tackle this great adventure. My wife got me a set of dog tags for my birthday to commemorate this endeavor and on one the Chinese Proverb reads... "The Journey is the Reward" I agree, especially in this race because I'm not sure if you know this but the winners get a little trophy. That's it. Well, a trophy and some barbecue. Not prize money or articles in Outdoor magazine, a little trophy and a **TON** of memories and stories.

posted by frazier k | [9:15 PM](#) | [0 comments](#)

SUNDAY, MAY 07, 2006

New Blades

For a canoe racer, your paddle is of primary importance next to the actual boat. I've described how Erick and I came to the decision on what boat to use previously. The paddles are also your second biggest investment monetarily speaking. When we bought the boat, we couldn't afford to throw down for the best paddles quite yet. So instead we bought a couple of Foxworks bent shaft wooden paddles that would be used as our back up paddles for race day. They cost a little less than half of what we would want to use come race day.

So maybe you're asking "what's the difference?" Well it comes down to shape and weight. The bent shaft paddles are the best design due to the movement of the paddle through the water and the posture of the paddler. You want for your blade to be as perpendicular to the surface of the water as possible. This transmits thrust directly behind you instead of up or down. When you waste your thrust at any angle other than directly behind you, it doesn't get you any closer to the finish line! But it does consume

some of the much needed energy to finish the race.

Our Foxworks paddles did have bent shafts which helped a great deal. What they didn't provide was the least amount of weight. Now granted, when I first held a Foxworks I couldn't imagine a paddle getting much lighter than that. It was made of wood and coated with a polymer to give added strength. However, from numerous forums and professional circles we were advised to go with the Zavarel Paddles, otherwise known as Zavs. Zavs are made of carbon fiber which can be quite durable and weighs next to nothing.

We needed to get our Zavs in before our fast approaching preliminary race on May 6, 2006. Furthermore, we needed an opportunity to break them in. It's like showing up to a football game in cleats you've never worn or a baseball game with a glove that has never caught a pass.

I found our paddles on zavarel.com and picked up the factory seconds. The paddles have very minor blemishes that allow them to be sold for less than the factory firsts. I've heard they are basically the same paddles with some moderate use of price discrimination they taught us in economics. Smart play by Zavarel and we got the blades at a discount!

So back to weight, why is weight so important? Well, your paddle is an extension of your arm the whole way down the river. And Zavarel has done the math on how significant weight plays a factor. In fact, for every 4 oz of additional paddle weight, you increase the amount of weight that the paddler has to lift over an hour by 1,000 pounds! Based upon a paddle rate of 70 strokes per minute. When you think about multiple days and over 260 miles, you realize that this whole weight issue is going to be serious business!

Now that the paddles are in, it's time for a field test! That means back to the hamster wheel.

posted by frazier k | [8:01 AM](#) | [0 comments](#) 

Racing #924

So we finally have a number for the boat. No name, but apparently the number is what the Texas Canoe Association requires. I mean, how do you really come up with a number that means something? There are zip codes, phone numbers, favorite numbers, etc. Finally though, we hit on something fairly cool.

The number is **924**. We are now officially boat #924! Any ideas how this one came about? Do you give up? Of course you do. The number is actually more of an address. A scriptural address really. The scripture is found in **I Corinthians 9:24** and reads on from there. Now granted, we have pulled the context of this verse slightly to fit our own scenario, but I love it! Read on below...

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.”

Translation: If you decide to do something, do it well. The prize in this situation for Erick and I is to finish this race. That has been slightly modified from the original, “kick but and take names” prize that we will have to be more realistic about. The truth is that we are as green as they come. Our race class is Novice! And although we would like to do well on our times, the finish is most important as well as the adventure!


The verse actually finishes like this,

“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

I like the bit about beating my body and making it my slave! At times I have to slap myself a little and remind my body who is in charge! Again, I apologize to any who have taken offense to the use of this verse. Truly, it means that as followers of Christ we are to run the race of life in such a

way that demonstrates where we find our identity. As Christians, that identity is in Christ and what we stand to gain is eternity with Him in heaven. That is the "prize" and in light of such reward we should be compelled to live a life of service towards God and man. Our perspective should be eternal vs temporal.

So enough on that, we got ourselves some digits!

posted by frazier k | [7:47 AM](#) | [0 comments](#) 

TUESDAY, MAY 09, 2006

Speed Lightning

Redbud Island to Longhorn Dam and Back

April of 2006

Distance: Approx 12 Miles

Duration: 2 hrs 20 minutes

Moving Average: Fast (our GPS ran out of batteries!)

Talk about smoking hot! Our new paddles allowed us to cut 10 minutes off the overall time to complete the wheel. At least we attribute the speed to our paddles. There were other potential factors at work. The absence of a stiff head wind that we normally encounter on Townlake seemed to help. The LCRA had also opened up some of the water flow from Lake Austin into Townlake that gave us a nice boost off Red Bud Island. That came back to haunt us though as we had to paddle against current to return to our starting position. So read it and weep. Our fastest time trial to date! Some take-aways from this trip are the following.

1.


Don't drink a tall coffee 10 minutes before doing anything that requires hydration or athleticism! Our consistent paddling and my lack of hydration led to all kinds of problems including head ache, body ache and overall discomfort.

2.

I need a more accessible design system for getting to my water. To remove your hands from the paddles is counter productive and to leave the bite valve in your mouth for the water creates jaw soreness and makes it difficult to speak.

3.

Less than two weeks to our first race and we still don't have a plan for our bilge pump!

posted by frazier k | [2:14 PM](#) | [0 comments](#) 

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2006

The Texas River Marathon

Cuero to Victoria

Official TCA Sanctioned Race

May 6, 2006

Distance: 45 miles (although our gps indicated closer to 40)

Duration: 7 hrs 10 min

Moving Avg: Approx 6 miles per hr

All of our training and preparation would be tested on this single event. Our first exposure to any canoe racing environment produced within the two of us a bit of anxious anticipation and nervousness. Our longest paddle to date would be 28 miles or so and this race would stretch us to 45 miles!

The alarm went off at 5am. The boat and gear had been loaded the night before so we could get an early start. I began to pack some last minute provisions and wait for Erick to meet me before picking up Stuart around 6ish from his house. Leading up to this morning there had been several intense storms sweeping across Texas. This is good for the rain that it brings, but bad for the simple fact that we are floating in an aluminum lightning rod! But our adrenaline was pumping and we were ready to paddle.

2 hours after leaving Austin, we pulled into the launch point at Cuero 285. The trucks and boats had already begun to stack up an hour before starting time. We sized up our competition and more importantly took notes as to what changes we would need to make with our boat. We met a couple of guys from Austin with a super tricked out boat painted white with a longhorn and #10 painted across the side. These guys were definite competitors. We didn't get the impression that they feared us too much as a threat! And time would prove their assumptions true. They pretty much

faded into the distance right off the get go. I've got my money on these two clowns from Austin. Of course nobody really knows what might happen over 260+ miles. It's less about who has the coolest paddles and more about who has what it takes to finish. Who has the endurance? I hope that includes us!

So we carried our boat to the river and dropped in among a sea of boats in all shapes and sizes. It was quite disorganized it seemed to me. Apparently there was a registration table that we failed to see in the midst of it all and our failure to register almost got us DQed! We never got our shirts either. I'm more than a little unhappy about that. But you live and learn right. That's what this race was all about. Stu worked the video camera a bit and networked with other team captains to gather some intel for future improvements.

So promptly at 9am the horn sounded and a mass of boats began to churn the water with their rapid paddle strokes coming from hundreds of pairs of arms. Erick and I paddled along conservatively as we let some of the more aggressive boats take their poll position towards the front. For the first couple of hours congestion on the river was pretty high. We were constantly passing or being passed as racers in different boats made better or worse time on the river.

Not far into the race the sky began to darken. We assumed from the beginning that we would get some rain, but it was the sights and sounds along with the rain that made us the most uncomfortable. The rain started, the sky darkened even more. It was almost as if night time was setting in when the rain fell faster, harder and the wind began to blow. On all sides of us we watched cloud to ground lightning bolts hammer the country side. We felt like a floating target there for a short while. We tried to hug the tree line and keep ourselves from being such an attractive strike point. The good side was that we were simply one of 72 boats on the water. If someone was going to get lit up on the water, we figured that 1 out of 72 odds weren't too bad!

Obviously we made it, and continued down the river with a boat full of water and soaked to the core. Our bilge pump was not fully installed, so we had a hard time pumping out the water. Instead we stopped, emptied the

boat and dumped the water. This activity set us back a good 5+ minutes. We are making some corrections to the pump for the next race.

Another serious time delay was due to the lack of sodium in our bodies. The sodium deficit will cause your fluids to go right through you without the body absorbing the much needed hydration. So basically what I'm getting at is that we had to pee a lot. Finally we reduced the time required to do so by engineering a method of peeing while seated in the boat. No we have not yet figured out how to keep paddling and pee, but at least we don't have to stop or balance on the edge of the boat!

Approximately 15 miles into the race we approached the first check point. This is where you tighten up your paddle rhythm and try to look like you know what you're doing for all the screaming fans. In our case, the screaming fans consisted on one soaked stu with his video camera. Go Stu! What would we do without our little bro. We gave Stu the nod and were on our way.

The next little set back for us, aside from the one time we rolled out of the boat to avoid sinking our canoe, came when Erick opted to take us left at a river fork. Up until this point we had been trailing the boat in front of us and shadowing their moves down rapids and around turns. It makes thinking a whole lot easier. We'll, we let them slip ahead when we stopped to adjust a few things and had no one to follow at this point. There were 2-3 boats who had fallen in behind us to do the same. So enthusiastically they let us lead the way, only they quickly realized we (Erick) had picked the wrong way and were able to make a quick correction. Unfortunately for us, it was a dead end and cost us a good 5-10 minutes to correct the problem. On down the river our followers went to steal a commanding lead. But we weren't really competing anyways right? It's all about the adventure right? Yeah right!

We passed another check point and hit the final home stretch with energy to spare. Our time of 7 hrs and 10 minutes was actually better than we thought we would do. We placed 3rd out of 8 Novice paddlers and 51st out of 72 total entrants. In less than two weeks we're going to turn it up a bit for the Dupont to Seadrift race. Stay tuned!

Hamster Wheel Gets Spanked

Redbud Island to Longhorn Dam and back

May 18th, 2006

Distance: Approx. 12 miles

Duration: 2hrs 17 minutes

We just can't help breaking another speed record for ourselves! Our rhythm is looking much better as well as Erick's ability to react to the "hut call" and my ability to time that call in such a way as to give him time to swap sides with his paddle in between strokes. In fact, we would have probably shaved another 5-10 minutes if we hadn't opted for a seat swap part way through the course. Due to the fact that we will most likely be swapping seats in an effort to alternate sleeping on the river, we thought it wise to give the other paddle position some practice.


Erick and I both agree that we like our assigned positions much better than the others. I'm sure that has everything to do with the fact that we've been practicing in our respective positions for the past several months. However, I will say that both spots have some significant advantages of their own.

For example, the stern (back) spot has plenty of room to stretch out his legs and takes a lot of pressure off the back end bone. The bow (front) spot will require a little extra seat padding. The biggest disadvantage to being in the stern is the amount of concentration it requires. You are the driver from that position. As a result, you tell the bow man when to paddle and where. I would compare this to a long road trip. When the shotgun passenger gets tired, they can doze off. Not the driver unfortunately. During my short experience in the bow spot, I found myself drifting off in thought and focusing only on the "hut" call from the stern that would prompt me to switch to the other side of the boat to paddle.

As the stern position, I must focus on where I'm leading our boat and not on outer space which is where I sometimes will find Erick. Also from the

bow, you've got nothing but wide open water in front of you. It's quite peaceful to watch endless stretches of river coming directly at you. From the stern, your view is always obstructed by the front 90% of the boat as well as your bow paddler.

So there is some food for thought. Quite interesting really.

posted by frazier k | [9:20 AM](#) | [1 comment](#) 

MONDAY, MAY 22, 2006

Saltwater Barrier to Seadrift

Starting just outside of Tivoli at the Saltwater Barrier to Seadrift

Date: May 20th, 2006

Distance: Approx. 20 miles

duration:

Place: 3rd in our division

This here is gator country. After reading several paddler forums focused on recent alligator activity in this area, Erick and I both were excited about the opportunity to encounter a few for ourselves! Due to the lack of substantial rainfall Texas has received this year, the water levels are down all across the state. This reduces the availability for these gators in South Texas to spread out and makes them a little bit hostile as they are forced to share space in close quarters. You just hope that hostility doesn't spread on to any unsuspecting paddlers!

The starting line of this years race to Seadrift was moved as the result of access being denied to the standard starting position in Dupont. That shortened the race quite a bit which was good for the short term but not as beneficial for our long-term conditioning. The river was narrow which forced us close to the banks occupied by our gator friends and made passing other paddlers difficult at times.

"Has anyone here this morning never crossed the bay before?" The race official asked. Several hands went up, ours included. "God help us," the man uttered as he shook his head. Not the most encouraging words to start the day. Erick and I were already feeling a bit nervous about the fact

that we don't have a spray skirt coupled with the high winds and turbulent bay we would soon encounter. FYI, a "spray skirt" stretches across the boat like a giant poncho and is designed to keep water from breaking into the boat and swamping your vessel. In years passed some paddlers have had to pop flares and be rescued by coast guard during the last five miles of the Texas Water Safari. To travel 260 miles and be picked up within eye sight of the finish line has got to be one way to ruin your life! So, hence our concern.

The beginning of this race was much like that of the Texas River Marathon. Only this time we did not forget to register! The bank was not overly accessible and only 1 or 2 boats could slip in at a time through the thick mud along the shore. As the river filled with boats, the horn sounded and off we went. This time we were going to compete! We felt after our first race that we left too much on the water. We wanted to do our best given the shorter distance.

We started out with an aggressive paddle and worked our way into the position that we would ultimately finish in. Third place behind the same two boats that beat us our last race. I mentioned one of these two boats in an earlier post but both of them are very competitive and they paddle to win. I don't feel bad about being beat by either team!

Our paddle remained quite consistent through the race as I called the huts and we volleyed for position among a sea of kayaks and canoes. We stayed with a small group of solo paddlers for most of the race. There was one spot people tend to get lost in and we wanted to be darn sure we had someone to follow that knew what they were doing. Trailer Cut is the name of the misleading side river. In fact, all the water seems to flow that direction so it's easy to see why so many end up there. We kept right and remained with the pack.

I should mention here that John Underwood stood in as Team Captain while Stu is off to Africa. John did a phenomenal job and was waiting at each bridge crossing to wish us well and make sure we hadn't become gator food! And our good friend Randy sponsored the previous nights accommodations in his grandmother's beach house just outside of

Rockport. That placed us within 30 minutes of the race start and allowed us to get a good nights sleep. Our support team rocks!

Much of the river was predictable paddling. The only thing Erick and I were really focused on was finding an alligator to complete our trip. We would not be disappointed. It was not one of the big monsters many people have seen on this stretch of river but probably a 5' gator that came up less than 10' from our boat to say hello. For a moment my heart beat quickened as we drifted towards it, but she ducked under the water and shot away beneath us as we approached. Some of the other paddlers did happen to see some of the larger gators. One guy said he came around a bend to encounter 5-6 of them splashing for the water as he startled them from their late morning sun soaking session. I hope that Erick and I don't end up here after night fall come race day!

After winding through the tall grasses and narrow river found on the lowest part of the Guadalupe, we were dumped out into San Antonio Bay. There was a sizeable group of paddlers preparing to make the crossing by fastening their spray skirts and putting on the mandatory pfd's required for this section of the race. One last power bar or energy goo to give us the strength to paddle through these rough waters was downed and off we went, thankful to have someone we could follow who knew what they were doing.

Up until this point we were doing remarkably well. However, our progress would soon be hampered by inexperience with crossing open water and waves. We were passed a total of four times while crossing the bay. Due in large part to the difficulty I had in making the foot pump bilge system extract the sea water from our boat. The angle of the pump installation made it hard for me to leverage my foot in such a way as to get a nice even push.

So there I was trying to make hut calls with wind howling head on, paddle like crazy through waves that were tossing us all over the place and pump the bilge to extract the rising level of sea water in our boat. Let me just say that men in general are unable to successfully multi task. I happen to be particularly bad at this even for man standards! So the end result was me

flailing about and failing at all three tasks. Oh, I forgot to mention yell at Erick as one of my tasks. In frustration I knew of nothing else to do but blame our bow man for the predicament. It's what any good brother would do. And I was quite successful at this task :-).

To our advantage, the bay never gets much deeper than 3-5' except in the ship channel. So most anywhere along the way we could jump out of the boat and bail the fast accumulating water. In fact, just as we rounded the horn of the bay and came into view of Seadrift, we decided to lighten the boat a little by bailing water. We lost at least another position due to a solo paddler who took the opportunity to put some distance between us and them. All the while I couldn't help but picture us trying to successfully navigate the bay under these conditions after paddling for 260+ miles!

After bailing the water, our boat was much more stable and we were able to cut a line straight for Seadrift. We paddled hard and pulled into the steps at Seadrift through what felt like the agitation cycle of a washing machine. As the waves came at us from the Gulf, the sea wall rebounded the incoming waves back out to sea. We were right in the middle of it for a few hundred yards being tossed around in an experience I would liken to bull riding. Although I've never really been bull riding before. I hear it's not easy.

So there you have it. Our second race. Our second third place win. And I do mean win, we got the trophy to prove it! What will happen in three weeks. Three weeks my friends. Three weeks and all this will be put to the ultimate test.

posted by frazier k | [10:21 AM](#) | [0 comments](#) 

WEDNESDAY, MAY 31, 2006

Things that Crawl in the Night

Luling Dam to Palmetto State Park

Date: May 28th, 2006

Distance: Approx. 14 miles

duration: 3 hrs 45min

It was Sunday night, Erick and I needed to squeeze in a night run to test our lighting system as well as our wits on the water after dark. Better to have some idea what night paddling on the river will be like before jumping into a race where we'll spend at least three full nights. Our test run would be one to remember.

My wife Jennifer actually helped me load the boat and gear until Erick met up with me around 8pm to head out for Luling. The plan was to be on the river by around 10pm and off by 2am. No sweat, we have done this stretch in the day time and 14 miles is a walk in the park compared to some of the other legs we've done!

After leaving Erick's car at Palmetto State Park we made our way back to Luling to begin our adventure. It was already well past sun down and the moon was almost totally obscured in its "new" phase. That's good news for race day, because in 2 weeks the moon will be "full" and that should help cast some light on the river provided we don't encounter many clouds. However, the downside was that tonight was sure to be a dark night.

After the boat was geared up, we lowered the canoe down the series of rock steps that support the bank of the river and prepared to launch. Erick and I both strapped on our life jackets as we had promised our wives we would. I also fixed a knife to my jacket for a quick grab if need be. We pushed off the bank into almost complete darkness. No moon and everything was bathed in an inky blackness that almost smothered us. It was a creepy feeling. And not 30 seconds after Erick had engaged the bow lamp did an alligator gar leap from the water and strike the aluminum bow. The impact made our teeth rattle and our hearts quicken a beat or two. "What the %#@ was that!" I asked. "I don't know, I think our bow was struck by a friggin gar!" Erick responded quickly. And as if to punctuate the eerie

moment, a water moccasin took the opportunity to glide across the water in front of our boat and beckon us to follow, "if you dare" it seemed to hiss.

As we peered into the blackness and down the river our ears began to detect sounds all around us. Movement, rustling of leaves, a splash into the water and a quick retreat by some animal. Before us lay an endless stretch of broken trees and scattered branches that formed log jams and sweepers. A dark creepy river we can handle. But having to approach these known habitat for everything evil, in the darkness, and figure out how to navigate through or around these obstacles was beginning to stress me out and was certainly slowing us down.


For our bow light we used a cheap 6volt water resistant flash light and some duct tape. We both wore head lamps as well to give us good short range illumination. The bow lamp performed at, or a little below par, but was great for illuminating the glowing eyes that seemed to watch us from every direction. One thing we quickly observed, is that coons seem to rule the night. We found our coon friends hanging from branches above the river, running along side of the banks, digging in the mud and pacing along side of us in the river. Cute animals I suppose, but their yellowish glowing eyes seemed to penetrate as they curiously watched us pass them by.

After about an hour on the river our nerves began to settle a bit. This was a welcome feeling after being so tense for the first hour. We just kept thinking about the stories we have read where gar have been responsible for cracking ribs and attacking the hands of paddlers on the river. These stories mixed with my own fear of spiders and the sounds of things crawling in the night was a lot to chew up for our first time. But we pulled through!

A little farther into the trip I decided to turn my own headlamp off. It is a weak lamp to begin with, but after the second bug flew into my eye and got stuck I decided the may fly magnet was not worth what little light it was producing. From then on I only flipped my head lamp on when climbing through log jams and avoiding spiders.

The paddle was slow going due to the constant reassessment of log jams and limited visibility. We had to back track a few times but never more than 20 or 30 yards. Again, we put ourselves less than two weeks down the road and imagined what we would be feeling on race day, or night rather, after a day full of paddling. It's not a good feeling, but memory is fleeting because not three days later I'm feeling the excitement all over again.

We cruised in to Palmetto State Park around 2:30am and loaded up our gear. The low water bridge was clogged with fallen trees and left us a narrow gap of maybe 3' along the right side of the bridge to slip up and out of the water. It was good to be done with our initial night run. We cruised back up to Luling to pick up my car and made our way back to Austin. It was about 5am when I walked through my front door to find a nice hot shower and long morning nap! We won't be so lucky after 4hrs of paddling come race day. We're in it to win it!

posted by frazier k | [11:55 AM](#) | [0 comments](#) 

THURSDAY, JUNE 08, 2006

Erick's Final Thoughts

So we are less than 48 hours from the point this "journey" reaches it's culmination of hard practice, time, energy, and \$\$\$ invested. It has been a good bonding experience with my brother and will certainly prove to get even more... bonding... as this race unfolds this weekend. In Aug we will be moving away from each other for an indefinite period of time on opposite continents of the world so we wanted to get really tired of each other before that happens!


As the race day approaches and I read the postings on the message boards, and I watch the weather reports coming across the television I am left with a mix of anxiety, fear, and excitement as what these days will hold. We are looking at record breaking heat in the triple digits for the entire weekend mixed with some of the lowest water levels in 50 years. This will truly be a challenging year for the TX Water Safari and particularly for these two rookies! We've spent the last couple of days gluing down the remaining items in our canoe, stocking up on food, trying to grab a bit more sleep than usual, and finishing up our bilge pump that really has yet to operate

affectively. We might be ripping that thing out and sending it with our team captain half way through...

Our goal is to finish this race within 75 hours but its really going to come down to just one paddle in front of the other, keeping our body functioning as best as possible, and lots and lots of time. Keep us in your thoughts a prayers Sunday night at 3:00 A.M. and envision us on a quiet, creepy river, fighting man eating spiders and killer alligator gars!

Crazy, bragging rights for sure at the end of this little jaunt.

See you on the other side!!!!!!!

posted by frazier k | [1:18 PM](#) | [1 comments](#) 

FRIDAY, JUNE 09, 2006

Captain's Log


The Texas Water Safari.....My brothers asked me to be the captain of their 260 mile endeavor and being the good little brother I am, I accepted. After reading the different job descriptions I came to grips with being an over glorified water boy or as one person put it "captain of the Texas Water Safari means Sucker". I have to admit that I was not 100% gung-ho about this race and my brothers knew that. But now as the Race is 2 days away and I have my bags packed I could not be more ready or excited to be apart of this.

What I do not think the blog has told you yet is that Erick and Brooke are going to East Asia for a year and that Kyle and Jennifer will be going to Argentina for a year. This race is something far more than "The Texas Water Safari" the *toughest boat race in the world*. This race will be one of the last adventures that my brothers and I take before they leave the country. With that said we will not be leaving with the story that we finished the longest canoe race in the world, no sir, we will be leaving with the satisfaction of finishing and placing in the longest canoe race in the world.

So as captain it is my job to give the motivational speech so here it goes for all to read.....

Erick and Kyle, You're my older brothers and I have always looked up to you guys and wanted to be apart of everything that you guys were apart of. You're the reason I came to Austin which in turn lead to me getting involved in the church and then that lead to me meeting Catherine. The Direction that my life took when I came to Austin was the greatest thing that could have ever happened to me and I thank God that I was blessed with you as my brothers. You have been 2 of the greatest influences in my life. I can't wait to see what happens to you guys in East Asia and Argentina. But before that this race defines everything that you will be up against. It's not easy to leave your friends and family for a year or leave the comforts of free refills and American life. There are going to be times you probably want to throw in the towel and come home but you can't. Just like this race, it's going to be long and it's going to be tough and you are going to get tired and you will most likely want to quit but you can't. There are no surprises on this race, you know what to expect and it is going to take more mental power than anything and that my friends is where you are going to win this race. Anyone can go out and paddle their hardest for a day and come in first but this is a 4 day race and it's going to take a lot more than brute strength. Keep your mind sharp and that will carry you through. I love you guys and I will see you at the check points!

Stuart

posted by frazier k | [8:53 AM](#) | [0 comments](#) 

Some Perspective

How many of you have ever made the drive from Houston to Dallas? Not a fun drive down I45. Well, if you've made that drive, depending on where you left from and went to in either of those big cities, the approx distance would be 240 miles. Add a short detour of 20 miles on top of that and you've got the approx. 260 miles of river that Erick and I will be paddling down in 24 hrs. The only problem is we won't be setting the cruise control at 79 miles per hour, we will be setting our canoe control at about 60, strokes per minute that is.

But big deal right. We knew that when we signed up for this ultimate test of physical and mental endurance. It will be Erick and I's biggest challenge to date and I'm quite certain we will come out a little wiser and stronger on the other side.



We spent this past week acquiring the remaining gear that we will need as well as making the final modifications to the boat. We moved the portage handles from their position hanging off the bow and stern to a sturdy mount on top of the bulk heads to eliminate drag in the water. You can see this in the photo on the left.

We have also finally completed the installation of our Bilge Pump system. As Erick mentioned, we might be pulling this whole thing out half way through the race, but we've spent far too much time and money trying to make this thing work. The pump now rests in the bow bulk head as you can see in this photo.



The photo on the right here is the part of the bilge system that intakes the water. It is the strum box. Trying to draw water on a virtually flat bottom boat is a feat in itself. We placed this box on the starboard side of the boat, so that when we lean that direction, the water will pool in that area. At least in theory.




Finally, after the water is drawn through the strum box by the foot pump, it is ejected through the hull of the canoe as shown in this photo. There is nothing like waiting until race day to test some fairly important operational gear.

Another system that we improved upon was our lighting system. Currently we each have a head lamp for night time navigation, however we needed something with a beam that can penetrate deeper into what lies down river. To solve that problem we mounted a water resistant 6volt lamp on the bow using some left over jug foam and a couple of straps. The finished product looks something like this.




Those are just a few of the things we've worked on this week. I'm beginning to think we should have focused on our paddling! Oh well, carpe diem, se la vi, or whatever. We have check-in at 2pm today and a pre race briefing at 4pm. More to come.

posted by frazier k | [6:34 AM](#) | [0 comments](#) 

How to find us on the water

If you think you're interested in catching up with Erick and I over the weekend, driving directions for each of the check points are found on the Texas Water Safari web site along with additional information you might find interesting. The link is, www.texaswatersafari.org. Driving directions are found under the "tools" link. There is also a photo gallery and info about the two guys that started this race many decades ago.

If all else fails, call our team captain Stuart. He will be following us down the river and can give updates on our progress or tell you how to find our land team. His phone number is 817-368-6134.

posted by frazier k | [6:26 AM](#) | [0 comments](#) 

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 2006


A Race Well Run

It's hard to know really where to start as I think back on the most significant challenge I've ever embarked upon. You'll all be happy to know that we're alive and well, or at least alive! That's a good place to start. Erick and I had racked up less than 120 minutes of total sleep over 3.5 days beneath crowded over passes. Sleep deprivation is simply an understatement.

Our goal of a 75 hr finish was not quite met, but we crossed the finish line in sea drift at 81hrs 8minutes I believe. I'll need to wait until the official times are posted, but that's close enough. The conditions on the river this year were touted as anything from the worst year ever to one of the worst in decades. The river has not been so low and the heat so high to any veterans recollection. Before the end of the first day almost 50% of the boats had dropped out of the competition. One of those boats happened to be a 15 year veteran! And many others had finished this race in previous years but couldn't seem to find the drive to finish in 2006. That said, Erick and I were more than pleased with our 81hr finish time.

I also wanted to thank those that showed up to help or holler for us along the way. Stu was the best team captain ever. He slept almost as little as Erick and I did. Constantly sending updates to concerned family members, directing well wishers and keeping tabs on us along the river. Thanks Stu,

your brothers got much love for ya. I also wanted to thank Randy and John for being the best possible assistant team captains. You three guys were what kept Erick and I pushing down the river. You and the others that showed including our lovely wives, parents, inlaws, Aaron Archer, Jason, Danielle, Katherine, Kara, etc. made this race endurable. Encouragement has taken on a whole new meaning for Erick and I. There will be much more information to come as well as some pictures and funny stories along the way, but for now I must rest.

posted by frazier k | [8:53 PM](#) | [1 comment](#) 

THURSDAY, JUNE 15, 2006

An Eight Letter Word

EUPHORIA

A feeling of great happiness or well-being.

That about sums up the dominant emotion for Erick and I as we crossed over into an elite class of paddlers who have accomplished the Mt. Everest of the paddling world. The Texas Water Safari. I'm not sure what exactly we set out to do when we began this adventure, but I'm sure we found it and so much more. And as masochistic as this race is on the body there are certainly talks about the next one. It's like tattoos or body piercings, fudge or french fries, fast cars and sky diving. You aren't sure why, but after you taste of it there is nothing that will stop you from taking another bite. But for now, a look at this years 2006 Texas Water Safari.

Friday night before the race was filled with last minute preparations. After check-in on Friday, we were informed that our amount of food was drastically underestimated and we needed to increase calories and carbs in order to equal the number of calories



required for your body to finish the race. So we stocked up on a few more power bars and gummy bears in an effort to be more prepared. Our lack of knowledge in this area would come back to haunt us during the race. We

eventually did run out of food and the food that we brought was not sufficient to sustain a body through the type of rigorous physical activity that we put ourselves through. We managed though it all one way or another.

For me personally, Friday night was a sleepless night. I couldn't manage to stop my mind from thinking and wandering. I kept checking over inventory, rehearsing portages and considering the unknown. I was quite frustrated when at 4am I realized I wasn't going to sleep much after that. So I layed as still as I could in an effort to keep my body rested. I prayed that the lack of sleep wasn't going to cause any long term damage to our race results. It really didn't matter a whole lot in the scheme of things.

Just before 6am I shut the alarm off and jumped in the shower to wake my body up. Erick would be over at 6:30 and then off to retrieve our little brother as we head to the starting line. Thankfully we were able to leave our boat there from the night before so



it was one less thing to worry about. When we arrived, the three of us began to provision the boat and prepare ourselves for the 8:30 boat launch. After a quick trip to the bathroom, some stretching, liquid loading and chatting with our captain we were in the water and heading towards our starting position at row 8 slot 1.

Just before the horn sounded to start the race we saw our lovely wives, team captain as well as a few friends gathered to show their support. It was a real comfort to have them there, but for Erick and I our thoughts were on the starting bell. Finally, after much anticipation, months of training and significant investment the horn that started this race let out a blare.

There were 101 boats registered for this years safari race and they had us fairly packed in, so when the race officially began, the typically calm water of the upper San Marcos bubbled with a turbulence of boiling water. The

first obstacle would be encountered less than 5 minutes into the race. A bottle neck dam where over 100 boats jockeyed for a path that would lead them to the other side. It was one of the more memorable moments on this trip where racers ran in all directions taking previously mapped out trails that would take them around the obstacle and provide a good place to re-enter the river. Erick and I followed what looked like a knowledgeable team through one dense trail entrance only to realize we had not chosen so wisely. We had to stop and wait for a bit while the 3 boats in front of us got through and re-entered the river before we could ourselves get through. All the while, in all directions, the trees were alive with activity as racers charged through full speed pulling, pushing, carrying and dragging their boats back to water.



Once back on the water we were off and looking good. The next portage would be less than a mile or two away. The Rio Vista Rapids had just been opened Memorial Day weekend and we had not had an opportunity to practice these yet so we opted for a

portage. We paddled hard to the left bank, exited the river and ran our boat below the series of rapids to shove off and be on our way. The spectators here were in large numbers to cheer us on and watch those brave enough to tackle the rapids. The entire first day of paddling had this high level of excitement along with it. That would not last into the second day, or even the first night really.

After Rio Vista Rapids, Erick and I made good time to Cotton Seed. This is another popular spectator spot as people gather to watch boats navigate the technical rapids or perish in the very slim margin of error that these nasty rocks provide. Lucky for Erick and I, we chose to go with an

aluminum boat partially for its destructiveness. We tore through Cotton Seed Rapids and managed to pull away with a half-victory. Only half because Erick jumped ship when we ran aground on a large rock and swam down to meet me at the bottom while I drove our canoe around the final rapids.

The next several portages went just as we had practiced them. No real surprises except for how much lower the river was then the last time Erick and I had a practice run. We passed through one stretch of river that was hosted by a very energetic group of encouraging spectators complete with a bag piper to play us a motivational horn ballad. Bag pipes pretty much rock by the way.



Our progress was looking good as we continued on from check point to checkpoint. Stuart would give us periodic updates on where we stood in the ranks for our division. For the most part we were a solid third place, just behind Blazing Paddles and Long Ride Home. These are the same two boats that beat us in both the Texas River Marathon as well as the Salt



Water Barrier to Sea Drift races. We of course never hoped to compete with either team, just lock down our third place position. That position would soon be taken from us, and the regained, and then taken once again.

I would say that for Erick and I, the first low point of this race came when we realized we weren't going to make the Luling Zedler Mill Dam check

point by 7pm. A race official had mentioned the day before that the cut off time had been moved from 9pm to 7pm in order to make this check point more difficult to attain. What we didn't realize, was that specific checkpoint was passed well before 7pm by us, we, or I rather, had gotten them confused. It wasn't Luling Zedler Mill, but Luling Hwy 90. Two very different checkpoints. So in an effort to make Zedler Mill by 7pm we paddled our hardest through some of that ridiculous Texas heat we got all weekend long. That 100% effort got us to Zedler Mill by 7:10 but wore us totally out. We had spent everything we had left and it wasn't even nightfall on the first day!

It was a shock to come around the last bend towards Zedler Mill and see my mother in law standing on the banks with her camera in hand. I hadn't expected the in-laws to make an appearance all the



way from Houston area. What a neat surprise. To bad Erick and I were not in the best of spirits. We rested for about 5 minutes while Stu hooked us up with water and ice and then began our next leg of the Journey to Palmetto State Park.

During this next leg of the journey, Erick and I mixed up some Gatorade and continued taking our E-Caps to keep electrolytes flowing through our body. The heat was causing us to burn through those badly needed hydration supplements. Without them, your body will not hold water for cooling. You will urinate often, and it will be clear, but your body will slowly die. In fact, you can over hydrate to the point of death caused by the swelling of the brain. Marathon runners have experienced this in years past. Erick and I found the balancing of our bodies' elements to be a difficult and ongoing task to manage. You need electrolytes to transport water to the bodies systems, you need water to transport, you need carbs to burn as fuel and energy, protein is required for muscle repair, etc. I'm no nutrition expert, but I learned enough to survive and I learned it quick!

The next portage on our route to Sea Drift would be Ottine Dam. This obstacle can be dangerous as it sneaks up on you in the middle of the night. In fact, there was a father/son team that stumbled over the edge of this dam during a practice run that resulted in the father's death a few years back. A blinking light alerts paddlers of this obstacle from the river. As soon as we saw the light, Erick and I paddled left to portage in a place we had practiced twice before. We made decent time as we pushed and drug our aluminum juggernaut up the steep banks and into the trees to navigate a well used trail. Add about 50lbs of water weight to our already full boat and you get one heavy lift!

It was night time when we pulled into Palmetto State Park. Our team captain and crew were waiting for us when we arrived. It really is a good feeling to see your close friends and family along the way to support you. I'm not sure how we would have made it without their constant encouragement and candor. We didn't hang out here too long because an aluminum boat had followed us in, and as much as we convinced ourselves that we weren't here to win any trophies we've all got a little competitive edge in us!

The next point we would see our crew would be 6am in the morning. Erick and I continued our pace through much of the night and kept each other awake by catching up on each others lives. But who am I kidding, he's my twin, what don't I know about this clown! I have much love for my bow man though. Our first night on the river proved to be moderately successful with the lighting system we opted to use. Erick was our eyes up front since I couldn't see jack from the stern spot. The main reason was Erick's silhouette seemed to totally fill the bow light in front of us. His bush hat didn't help much either! At night, the bow spot took a lot of concentration and I was thankful that Erick was up there to battle the influx of bugs that flocked to the big light. But he led us to freedom at Gonzo, the next check point. I had a head lamp as well but only engaged my lights when clearing log jams and other obstacles.

By the time we hit Gonzales Dam Erick and I were totally wasted from a day filled with lifting, pushing, pulling, kicking, cussing and carrying our boat over gravel bars, through trees and down dams. We had done as


much power lifting as we had paddling! One more tough portage at Gonzales and we were looking for a place to rest with earnest. The sun was coming back up and we were thankful for the few hours of dawn that would give us light but no heat. By this point over 30% of the boats that started this race almost 24 hrs ago had dropped out.



Just about the time I was ready to pass out, we came upon the Gonzales 183 checkpoint to find none other than, Stu, Randy and John waiting to cheer us up. Offering us a cup of starbucks, this was actually quite cruel, and asking for updates. From a racing

mentality, you do not waste time at these checkpoints. They are simply designed to provide water and a split times. But for Erick and I, we coveted these stops as more than liquid refills, it was a morale boost of epic proportions!

So started the second day...

posted by frazier k | [6:59 AM](#) | [0 comments](#) 

SATURDAY, JUNE 17, 2006

And the Beat Goes On...

Day 2

Approx 7am

Erick and I paddled off leaving Gonzales 183 in our wake and feeling much better than when we had first pulled in. We still needed to take 30 minutes to rest our muscles and load up on food. It was just dawn as the sun began its route to torment us from above, so we pulled off to the side of the river and took our break. During that time, several boats made their way past us, including two aluminum boats that had been trailing us all night. It's never fun to get passed by boats racing in your own class, so we took a quick goo shot and dug the blades in for a little catch up. We knew that they would

have to stop at some point to rest as well so we just decided to paddle our own race and let them paddle theirs.

This particular stretch of River from Gonzales to Hocheim is miserable. 36 miles of endless river with no check points or places to see your road team. The triple digit heat roasted our aluminum boat and pierced our bodies with a draining agony. We had to stop often to jump in the water and cool our rising body temperatures to avoid heat stroke or exhaustion. It was on this stretch of river that we came to know a solo paddler named Mike.

Mike had already begun to hallucinate from sleep deprivation and was just stoked to have another human being to talk to. So Erick and I visited with Mike for quite a while as we swapped stories about families and life in the outside world. It was a bonding experience and a friendship that would grow as the hours on the water.

Eventually though, we had to leave Mike for the time being and paddle onward in hopes of maybe catching one of the aluminum boats that passed us earlier.

After 8 or 9 hours of constant paddling we stumbled into Hocheim to get a re-stock on fluids. We didn't hang out at this check point for long but savored the time to see our wives and friends.

Night fall was setting in as we left Hocheim for the next check point in Cheapside. We were making really good time now that the heat of the day began to lift and we had the perfectly ideal time of day to paddle before total darkness. We passed an aluminum boat as well as three others in the first hour. We knew that our pace wouldn't keep for ever, but we took every advantage of it that we could.

It was surreal to think as the second night set in that we had been paddling for two full days and just now beginning our second night. Our bodies still seemed to be working so we pressed on. Even with a full moon, searching the darkness ahead for sweepers and gravel bars with our bow light was slow going. We had to back up a few times and slow down our pace considerably. Next the tiredness started to set in. We took a caffeine pill to keep our minds attentive to obstacles on the river as we paddled on

through the night. Again, I must commend my bow man for his guidance up front. I spent all day long driving from the stern position, but when night falls Erick takes the reigns.

The caffeine pills seemed to work great for a time. But after several hours the weight of our eye lids began to increase with each stroke of our paddles. We both began dozing off at certain points, running into gravel bars or jarred by sweepers. We tried talking to each other and making conversation, but the power of sleep deprivation was a monster we could not easily tackle. “If you could be pro in any sport, what would it be?” Or “When we move away from Austin next year, what will you miss the most?” The questions persisted. I’ve got a new found respect for you solo paddlers with nothing but your own thoughts to keep you company at night.

Based on our pace and time on the river I knew we had to be close. I felt like it was always just around the next bend. Well, finally it was just around the next bend. And we headed for the bridge lights in a comatose stupor like a mosquito to a bug zapper.

All of a sudden SPLASH! One second we were drifting in a dream and the next we were swimming and watching in horror as the water filled our boat. We were helpless as the canoe was being sucked into the dreaded sweeper. We scrambled about while our paddles and food rushed into the swift current. I grabbed what I could and Erick ran down stream to get our food but the boat was stuck. De ja vu. Hadn’t we done this on a practice run? Hadn’t we swore never to let our boat get stuck in another sweeper again! How could this happen, we were within 100 yards of our next check point!

We both panicked and ran what equipment we could grab to the nearest gravel bar before returning to pry on our boat. It took everything we had in us to wrestle that boat free and I’m still amazed that she came loose. We emptied the water and took inventory to see what had been lost. Our food rations we’re a little low to begin with, so there was no margin for error in the event we lost one of our containers. Luckily the only item never recovered was a bottle of Tums I believe. Thanks to Erick’s quickness down the river to gather our loose gear and my awareness of where the

paddles went, we were still in this thing.


We covered the last few hundred feet into Cheapside heavy with frustration and defeat. We had planned to take 60 minutes here originally to gather some strength and continue. Unfortunately when we arrived our captain was not waiting for us, no worries, we had planned to hang out here anyways. Stu and the land team were held up at a gas station that was hand bagging their ice one cube at a time! So we scoped out a place to lie down and lick our wounds.

It wasn't long until our land team arrived and we had laid out our \$1 Poncho from Academy to separate us from the ants. Stu would time our 1hr nap. In less than 60 seconds, Erick was out and sawing some serious logs. The exhaustion from the two days of paddling, the deficit of minerals in my body and the last spill into the river started adding up for me. My body craved sleep, but sleep would not come. Instead came the shakes. Just a little at first, but then they really took off. I shook so hard my stomach started to cramp up. I couldn't wake Erick who needed sleep as bad as I, so I sat on the poncho and forced myself to eat and drink. I stripped off my wet clothes but it was too little, too late. I didn't have adequate dry clothes to put back on. Everything was wet.

The hour was up. Nothing like pulling cold, wet clothes back on your body to get you going! Erick was super groggy, but we plodded back to the river where our boat waited for us. I hated that thing, I wanted nothing to do with it, and I was revolted at the thought of sitting back down in that boat to paddle more. But we did, Erick trying to orient himself and me still shaking. If ever there was a time I could have thrown the towel, if that was ever an option, this was that time for us.

Something that got me through many of the low points on this race was the hope and anticipation of the next high. Each day was filled with multiple highs and lows, but the fact is you WILL pull through. Erick and I knew we needed to figure out how to stabilize our bodies and find that next rush of life. We pulled over onto a gravel bar and decided what our bodies needed most was real food. No more gummy bears, rice krispy treats or airheads! We lit up our camp stove and boiled some water. I had

really hoped that the stove would provide more heat, but I would take what little radiated from the hot pot sitting on top. My shakes at this point had crescendoed and I dropped a full pot of hot water unable to control myself. The second pot of hot water was good. We dropped the oatmeal in and forced ourselves to eat this food until it was gone. The results weren't immediate, but our bodies slowly took on a form of normalcy. And before too long, the rush of morning came and our morale was beginning to climb. The closing of the second night would end on a positive note. We just had to hang in there for our next long Trek from Cuero to Victoria. Two days, two nights and we've never been closer to Sea Drift than we were at that moment!

posted by frazier k | [9:47 AM](#) | [1 comment](#) 

MONDAY, JUNE 19, 2006

Over the Hump on Day 3

As day three began, I knew that my body needed to grab that hour of rest I missed out on at Cheapside. Erick was feeling pretty good, so as we left the Cuero checkpoint for Victoria we swapped positions and I sat bow spot while Erick drove us from the stern. I just sat there with my elbows propped on the gunnels of the boat and drifted in and out of sleep for 30 minutes until Erick rudely interrupted my slumber with a sweeper alert. Once we had easily passed through that obstacle I dozed a short while longer and was feeling superb. The trek from Cuero to Victoria is approx. 45 miles, so we knew it would be a long day. In fact, this was a familiar stretch of river for us as we had competed here in the Texas River Marathon.

During this long haul we had decided to slow our pace and focus on our finish. We somewhat regretted that decision due to the amount of time we felt was lost along the way, but one thing is for certain, we were in high spirits. The quick nap and a goo shot seemed to light me up. I think Erick was a little surprised that such a nominal nap could change my mood and morale so much. We talked for a good part of this stretch about life, love, business and the infinite ways we had both been blessed.

There were a few optional checkpoints between Cuero and Victoria that our faithful land team met us at. Our biggest battle during this stretch of

river was without question the heat, the inescapable heat. Second to that were the ever frequent stops to drag our boat over gravel bars. We were programmed though, our bodies seemed to operate on a sort of cruise control, paddle, walk, drag, paddle some more.

Simply being on the back half of this race course felt superb, and as the day wore on we eventually paddled upon the Victoria check point. Erick and I decided that we would commemorate our last night on the river with a 90 minute nap and be fresh to paddle the distance left to Sea Drift. Thankfully we were both for the most part dry and more than ready to shut our eyes. Stu led us to a spot on the grass and we laid our .99 cent poncho back down and shoveled an MRE down along with some water to begin storing up some much needed energy.

No sooner had our heads hit the poncho when we were awoken by Stu's prodding. It was time to get back on the river and paddle through our last night. Our solo buddy Mike had decided to wait for us to travel this stretch of river in order to take advantage of our bow light and the occasional conversation that persisted. We both left Victoria and paddled quickly towards DuPont. Mike's pace was a little slower than we had hoped for, but he did wait for us to travel so we felt compelled to slow the pace down. This worked for a while, but slowly as time went by Mike slipped farther and farther behind us. Erick and I both felt bad about leaving him behind, but the statement he made to us between Gonzo and Hocheim seemed to resonate in our minds, "remember that this is a race and at the end of the day we are all competing to finish."


If we could go back to that night I'm not sure if we would have left Mike behind and focused on "our" race, or pushed him along with some much needed encouragement. Either way, what's done is done. Regardless, Erick and I were extremely happy to hear that Mike did indeed finish the race several hours after we did.

Towards the end of our paddle to DuPont, Erick and I began to get very exhausted. We both fought the weight of sleep deprivation as we passed in and out of various states of consciousness. Luckily there were no sweepers that sucked us in, but plenty of log jams and gravel bars to run into. We

also saw a number of snakes during the night. We had to be very careful when we jumped out to portage over low water and make sure no water moccasins were opportunistically waiting for a soft foot or ankle to get down on!

The DuPont check point couldn't have come soon enough. By this time the mosquitoes had really started to swarm. In fact when we brought the boat below 3 miles per hr, the evil insects could lock on to our body heat and find us floating along. We tried spraying our bodies down with bug spray, but as they say "persistence breaks resistance." And just like I used this policy to score a wife, these demonic beings used it for lunch.

Another problem that persisted as we pulled into DuPont was a serious back pain that I had developed in my upper back. It was not so much muscle fatigue and soreness as it was the feeling of a pulled muscle from one of the many boat lifts. I had Erick stick on a Ben Gay menthol patch to see if it would ease the pain. Then we were back in the boat and picking up speed to outrun the mosquitoes. We turned and waved to our land team as we left, hidden behind the mesh walls of their mosquito tent. Day was breaking and we we're stoked to make Sea Drift by mid afternoon. It would be our last day on the water and we knew our bodies were not going to hold up much longer.

posted by frazier k | [6:19 PM](#) | [0 comments](#) 

THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 2006

4th and Final

We continued from DuPont at a stiff pace. I tried to alternate through some various paddle techniques to alleviate the back pain that was growing in its intensity. We had been warned that four log jams lay ahead of us before the Salt Water Barrier in Tivoli. These were rumored to be some pretty nasty obstacles but we were thankful to reach these in the light of day.

Our first log jam came at a fairly tricky intersection. We knew that there was a place on the lower Guadalupe that split in two directions with one going on to Tivoli and the other to Green Lake I believe. We weren't quite sure which one went where and we both searched our minds for

information that would clue us in on what to do here.

We remembered that the 6-man boats mark their trails with ribbon and paint so we began searching for any and all clues. We started one direction and then turned the other. After continuing that way for about 10 minutes we turned around once again and began in the other direction. The heat of the day, frustration of lostness, increased back pain and reality of a delayed finish began to wear on our nerves. I pulled out the GPS that was running low on juice and was able to get a bearing on which direction Tivoli was.

We were back on track and before too long we began to detect evidence of previous passage from other boats before us. The first log jam was by far the most difficult. The instructions we had received were to try and push through the right side. Well, this was not a realistic option. So we followed a worn trail up and out of the river to the left through approx. 100 feet of trees and dense foliage before pushing the canoe back down the river bank and into the water. Our boat had not yet seemed as heavy as it did on this portage. And to keep us moving were swarms of mosquitoes like I had never seen or experienced. As soon as our boat hit the water I dove in after it. The only proven method of keeping these evil messengers of death away was to plunge below the surface of the water.

Once Erick was down the bank and in the river we sped off towards the next logjam. The remaining obstacles would be much easier to navigate than the first had been. By this time my back was beginning to give me significant problems and I knew that something had to be done. I recalled a back brace that I had used to support my lower back after a weight lifting accident and assumed that the same principles would apply. Tight pressure on the area of pain was just what the doctor ordered. And a nice shiny roll of duct tape was the tool to perform the operation. I ran the duct tape around my upper back and chest several times to fabricate a tight fitting brace. It didn't solve the problem but certainly alleviated enough pain for me to continue paddling. We were too close now for my old bones to give way!

The heat of the day began to make us a little bit cranky here, but more

than anything we felt the finish. It was so close we could smell the salt water blowing in from the bay. It was already noon when we looked at our watch and realized we wouldn't make the award ceremony. We thought of those boats that had arrived for the barbeque and wondered what it must have been like. Our goal was originally to be done by noon on Tuesday, but we weren't far off.

We cruised into the Salt Water Barrier to find our land team anxious and ready for us to finish. We could tell that Stu was beginning to fade from the heat and exhaustion as well. We had seen this barrier before and knew that Sea Drift wasn't but 3-4 hrs from reach. We lit out of Tivoli ready for a strong finish. We would meet our team one last time at wooden bridge before embarking upon the bay. The heat was smothering. Erick began to drift a little and was noticeably shaken with heat fatigue. I would splash him with water using my paddle and instructed him to drink often, but we were both feeling the effects of little to no rest and dizzying heat.

After we made the turn-off at trailer cut we slipped past the silent gate keeper that watched us from the surface of the water. A 6' alligator that seemed to be as startled to see us as we were to see him. He just kinda drifted a little and waited patiently for us to pass before going back to whatever it was he was doing. A short while later we passed a much larger 8' gator that turned slowly off its mud bar and sank below the water to find some privacy.

This part of the river is very unique and offers some of the most diverse vegetation as well as aquatic wildlife. The numerous cows all around reminded us quite characteristically that we were still in Texas!

We stopped briefly at wooden bridge long enough for mosquitoes to drain a qt of blood or two and then strapped on the life jackets to prepare for our bay crossing. We had a couple more miles of river ahead of us and then approx. 5 miles of bay to cross. The only other problems we had on the river portion was Erick steering us into the dense vegetation on either side of the river. Perfect habitat for a large gator to slip into our boat and invite us to dinner! It was actually both our faults I'm sure as we continued to fade.


Finally, the river opened up and before us laid the vast expanse of San Antonio Bay. At least vast compared to the narrow river we had been accustomed to. We immediately headed right and followed the shoreline out towards the Gulf. The bay was smooth as glass this late afternoon which is rare. We wanted to try and get across the shipping channel before the wind picked up as well as the waves. This part of the race takes some prior experience and we both thought back to the last bay crossing we undertook to try and remember any landmarks. The only problem was that we had a dozen other boats to follow last time. This time we would be on our own. Without the constant effect of land moving past you on the river, this bay progress seemed to be almost non-existent. I felt like we were paddling in an endless pool. We did though continue to pull closer to that special city of Sea Drift.

At various moments I did panic a little as I thought about ending up in the wrong city or wrong part of the bay but eventually we could make out the dark outline of the Sea Drift Sea wall and observed the American flag waving in the stiff breeze that began to pick up. Almost as soon as we had crossed over the shipping channel, and brought Sea Drift into view, the waves picked up. We couldn't have timed it more perfect. Thus far our bilge pump had not proved to be overly successful. We did not want to prove its worth this late in the race! Last time we crossed the bay we had to dump the water out of our boat that crashed in on every other wave, but this time we had gotten lucky.

In the distance we could make out the signs and banners of our most encouraging land team. We knew that protocol was to continue heading out to sea and make a direct approach to the sea wall in an effort to avoid crossing the incoming waves, but we didn't care. As soon as we saw our friends and family from the shore we went straight for it. The waves tossed us like a carnival ride and we couldn't have cared less. We paddled into Sea Drift with a smile that couldn't be touched. Perma grin I believe it's called. We had officially crossed over to the other side. Time to celebrate.

Erick and I rolled out of the boat and were immediately helped by some of

the most encouraging race officials. They lifted our boat up and on to the sea wall while we attempted to learn how to walk for the second time. Up the ladder and on to dry land where another race official handed us plaques and patches for a job well done. Pictures were taken and hands shaken. It was hard to imagine that it was all over. What a glorious day.

posted by frazier k | [5:47 AM](#) | [0 comments](#) 

MONDAY, JULY 10, 2006

A Few Photos



The following link will take you to our photo album page. You do not need to log in to view the slide show. Just sit back, roll the slides and enjoy the show! Compliments of Stu!

<http://share.shutterfly.com/action/welcome?sid=8AZNmzhw2ZuXzw>

posted by frazier k | [7:21 AM](#) | [0 comments](#) 