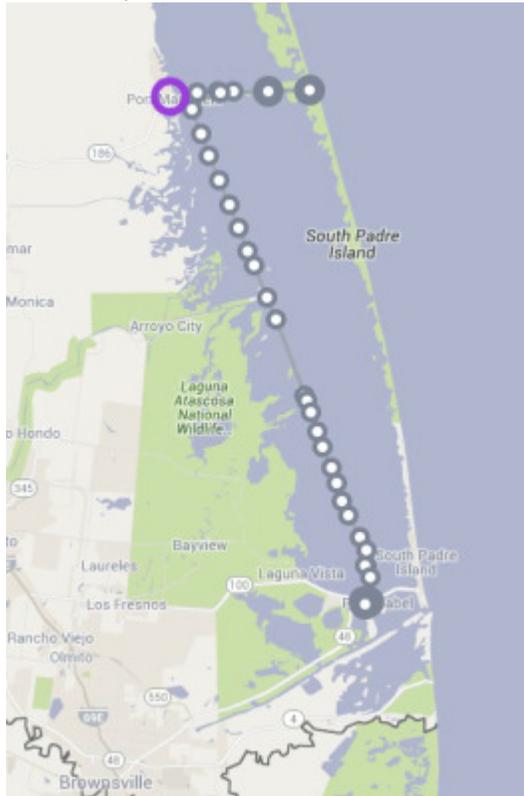


Other than a canoe

By Russell Turpin

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Monday brought several firsts for me. In forty years of sailing, it was the first time I ever capsized a boat. Other than a canoe. And damned, if we didn't do it twice. It was the first time I have ever hauled a boat more than a couple hundred yards by foot. Other than a canoe. It was the first time I have ever stood in chest deep water next to a channel marker, rode in hand and boat behind, hoping for a friendly tow. Not even with a canoe had I ever done that.

Our tent and sleeping pads were lost in the first capsizing. I am very grateful to the fleet mate who loaned us a spare tent that night, saving us from the mosquitoes. It was not the first time I have slept on hard ground, though that is something that becomes less and less appealing the older my joints get.

We made a lot of mistakes. In retrospect, the most important was that our choice of vessel was unsuited to the passage planned. The Boston Whaler 4.6 is a planing dinghy more meant for day sailing than venturing. In quartering seas, it surfs surprisingly easily. *Yee-haw!* We made good time for a 15 foot boat. It is a tough boat and unsinkable. But... It has nary a cleat or U-bolt or any other tie down for securing gear. Its freeboard is measured in inches, perhaps fewer than designed with us and gear aboard. When its rail went under in any kind of swell, we capsized. That was complicated by a kick-up rudder that did not easily push back down. We lost helm at least a dozen times.

So, for us **the Texas 200** became the Texas 40. We sailed from the jetties to Pt Mansfield Tuesday morning, and ended our adventure there.

Though we didn't finish the intended trip, what we did was good. The southernmost part of the Laguna Madre is a pretty sail. Pt. Mansfield is a fun, little fishing town that I had never before visited. TW is a reliable and enjoyable partner at sea. I am grateful to all the fleetmates who stood by while we recovered from capsizes, to those who towed us, to those who loaned us a tent, and to TW's friends who helped us get home from Port Mansfield. Likely, there are other sailors who helped in ways we didn't even notice.

What worked: I was pleasantly surprised by the Moheem water shoes I bought for this trip. When I was dragging the boat through thigh-deep mud, they stayed securely on my feet. And were comfortable for two days on the boat. The waterproof bag TW loaned me for my cellphone saw it through the trip. **Life360** is a neat little app that let's family and friends track your cellphone, even through areas of sporadic cell coverage, and even when you're too busy with other things to phone home. It generated the track left for Monday. Of course, if my phone had been lost in that first capsizing, Carolyn would have worried needlessly!

What failed: TW's new and allegedly waterproof VHF and my new and allegedly waterproof flashlight were useless after the first capsizing. No matter how they are advertised, many electronic gadgets do not survive their first encounter with sea water.