

Texas 200 – 2019

A Year to Remember

My 2019 TX 200 journey began about the middle of 2017 after that years' event. I by chance discovered the TX 200 website and began reading the accounts. All of them. I was hooked. I naturally bounced from there to the Duckworks website and started looking at all the different boat designs. I had no firsthand knowledge of sailboats even though I only live four miles from Matagorda Bay. The annual Youth Cannonball Regatta being about the only time more than a handful of sailing vessels is in the area. After much deliberation I settled on a design. The Jim Michalak Ladybug fit the bill perfectly. Stable, robust, able to carry plenty, and large enough for me and the family or solo. Handles bay chop well, can go very shallow, and a great boat to learn on.

I ordered the plans and began building on May 1st 2018. I have basic skills and had built the Six Hour Canoe from an outdoors magazine in 1997. Mr. Michalaks plans and book made this build just as easy. Along the way I rebuilt a trailer and ordered a sail. I finally finished in early May of this year. Not much time to get her ready. I immediately started sailing and learning as much as I could on the water, in all kinds of conditions. I took the warnings seriously about being able to sail in adverse chop, winds, heat, etc. After an intense two weeks I was comfortable with our abilities, mine and the boats, I signed up for this year's event. My fourteen year old son committed to going a couple weeks later. We were ready.

After the Captains Meeting in Port Mansfield Sunday morning there was a lot of talk about the winds. A rare Norther' was scheduled to pass by and change the usual Southeast wind to a North or Northeast wind. I wasn't sure what to do but figured this late in the year they are not usually that strong and the wind change is typically very temporary. Some opted to drive back to the finish line at Magnolia Beach and run backwards and meet up with the fleet later. Others decided to continue as planned and leave Monday morning. We decided to hedge our bets and leave about noon on Sun. We did not want to be stuck in the narrow Land Cut with the wind in our face if the forecast was correct.

We cast off and had a good half day sailing. We made it thru the Land Cut and to the entrance to Baffin Bay. We made camp and settled in for the night. We thought we were the only boat around but saw a boat anchored about a mile or two away the next morning. They were quickly on their way and we soon followed. About 20nm later we made it to the scheduled Camp 1. There were already 7 or 8 other boats there before us. We had to row in the last two miles when the winds went calm. Thanks to whoever lit off the fireworks to guide us in after dark. Mother Nature provided some more that night with a lot of lightning and rain. Woke the next morning to find someone was short a boat. She had apparently dragged her anchor in the storms and headed south. Found out later she was recovered about 4 miles away and all was well.

Tuesday still had winds from the wrong direction. We finally made it under the JFK Bridge and into Corpus Christi Bay. We camped on Mustang Island in the Fish Pass area with Team Hippe. A lot of thunderstorms around again that night. It was a rough, choppy start Wednesday morning. Made it thru Shamrock Cove and Stingray Hole, unstepped the mast to go under the 361 bridge and made it as far as

Estes Cove. We camped on a small spoil island across from some fancy houses. Thought they might call the fuzz on us but never saw anyone.

Thursday morning saw very light winds. Left our spoil island by Talley Island via Trout Bayou and into Aransas Bay. Only made it about 5nm in about 5 hrs, most of it rowing. Stopped at Rockport Beach Park for an outdoor shower and a Sno Cone. Took a break and figured what to do next. Got a bit of ENE wind and pushed on into Aransas Bay. We headed for the LBJ Bridge and 6nm later called it quits.

Our Michalak Ladybug 'Karankawa' did well on her first extended voyage. She rode out some heavy Corpus Christi Bay swells. A few even came over the bow but she performed well and never felt out of control or unstable. She is not the fastest boat by any means but she can haul a load of gear and rolls with the punches.

Thanks goes out to Dave Gray at Polysails. He went out of his way to get me a sail quickly and I appreciate the great customer service. It performed well and I look forward to ordering from you again when you get moved to Tennessee.

Overall we made it 140 of the 200 miles to Magnolia Beach by sail or row only. We are happy to have done it and look forward to next year. I was impressed with the willingness of everyone to help each other. We pretty much stayed to ourselves and didn't see many of the other boats but did help a couple get to deeper water in the mornings at camp. Besides the wrong way winds we had a good trip. Pretty tame compared to previous years and this year's runaway boats, lightning storms, and snakebite. Glad everyone is okay.

Mostly I was pleasantly surprised of how well my 14yr old son did. He never complained about the heat, made the best of the primitive camping and food, and grudgingly tolerated having to row. All in all we had a good time and he even wants to do it again. Good times and memories. See ya'll out there.

Chad Schneider